

at the borders of (film) history

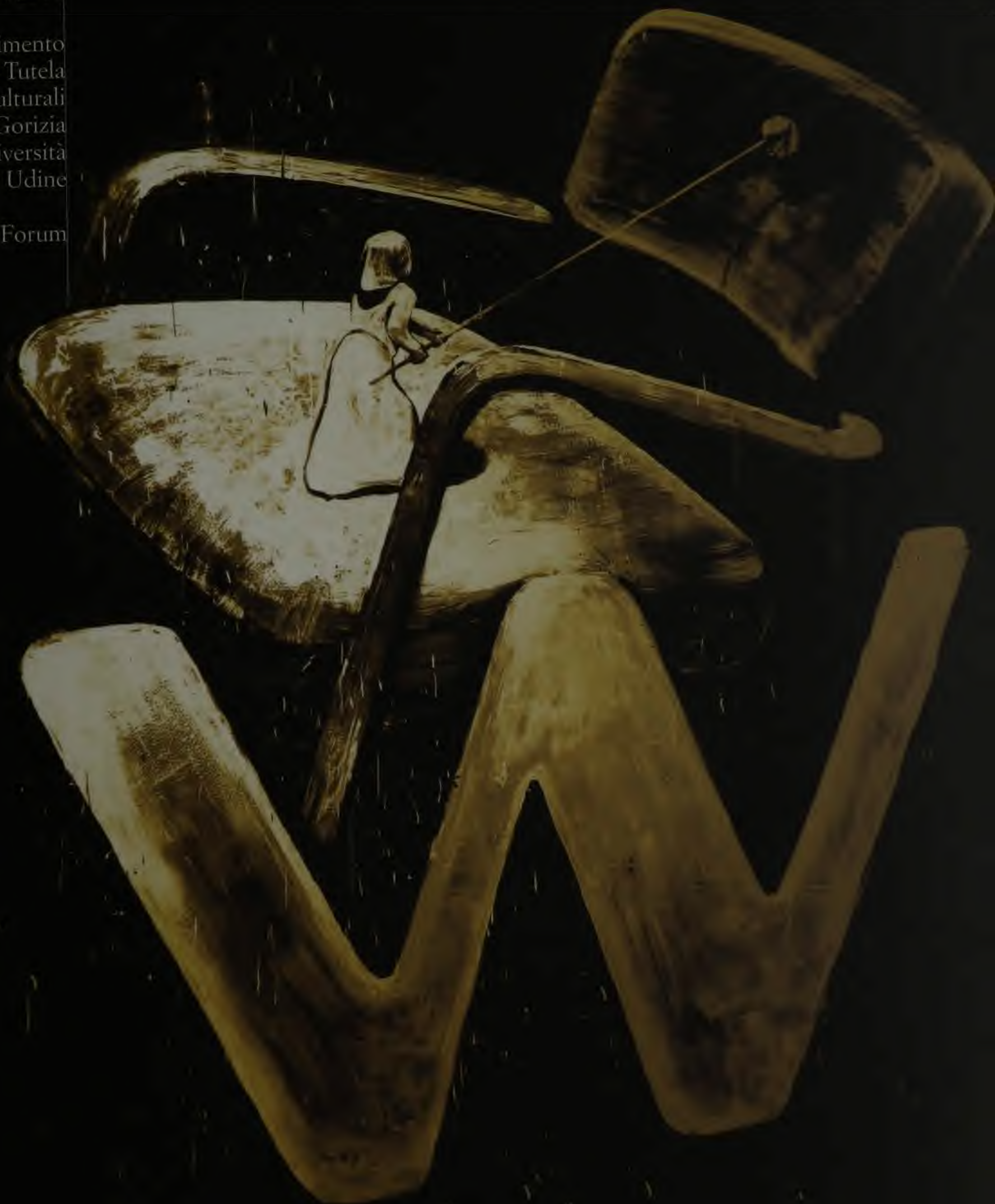
*Temporality,
Archaeology, Theories*

a cura di/edited by
Alberto Beltrame
Giuseppe Fidotta
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FilmForum/2014

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At the Borders of (Film) History. Temporality, Archaeology, Theories

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XXI Convegno Internazionale di Studi sul Cinema
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Udine, 2-4 aprile 2014 / April 2-4, 2014

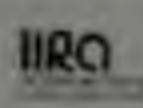
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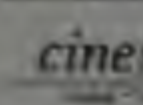
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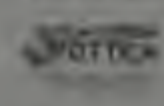
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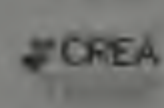
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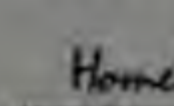
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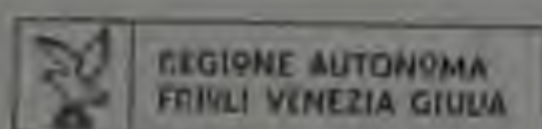
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In collaborazione con le riviste/*In collaboration with the journals:*
"CINÉMA & Cie", "Cinergie. Il cinema e le altre arti", "GIAIMIE"

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Ufficio stampa/*Press:* Volpe & Sain Comunicazione

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Disegni e progetto grafico/*Graphics:*
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Impaginazione/*Layout:*
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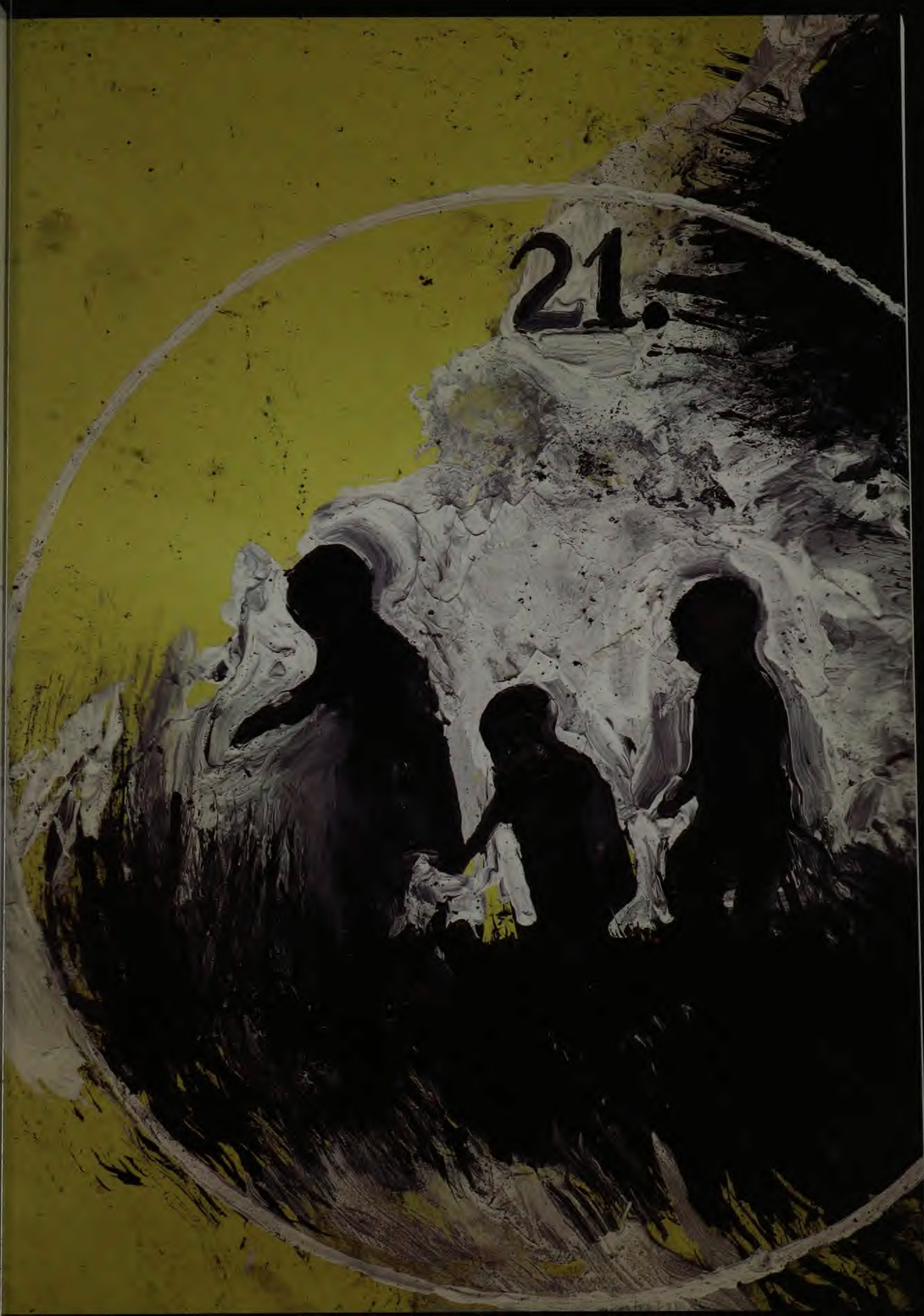
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Tipografia Menini, Spilimbergo (Pn)

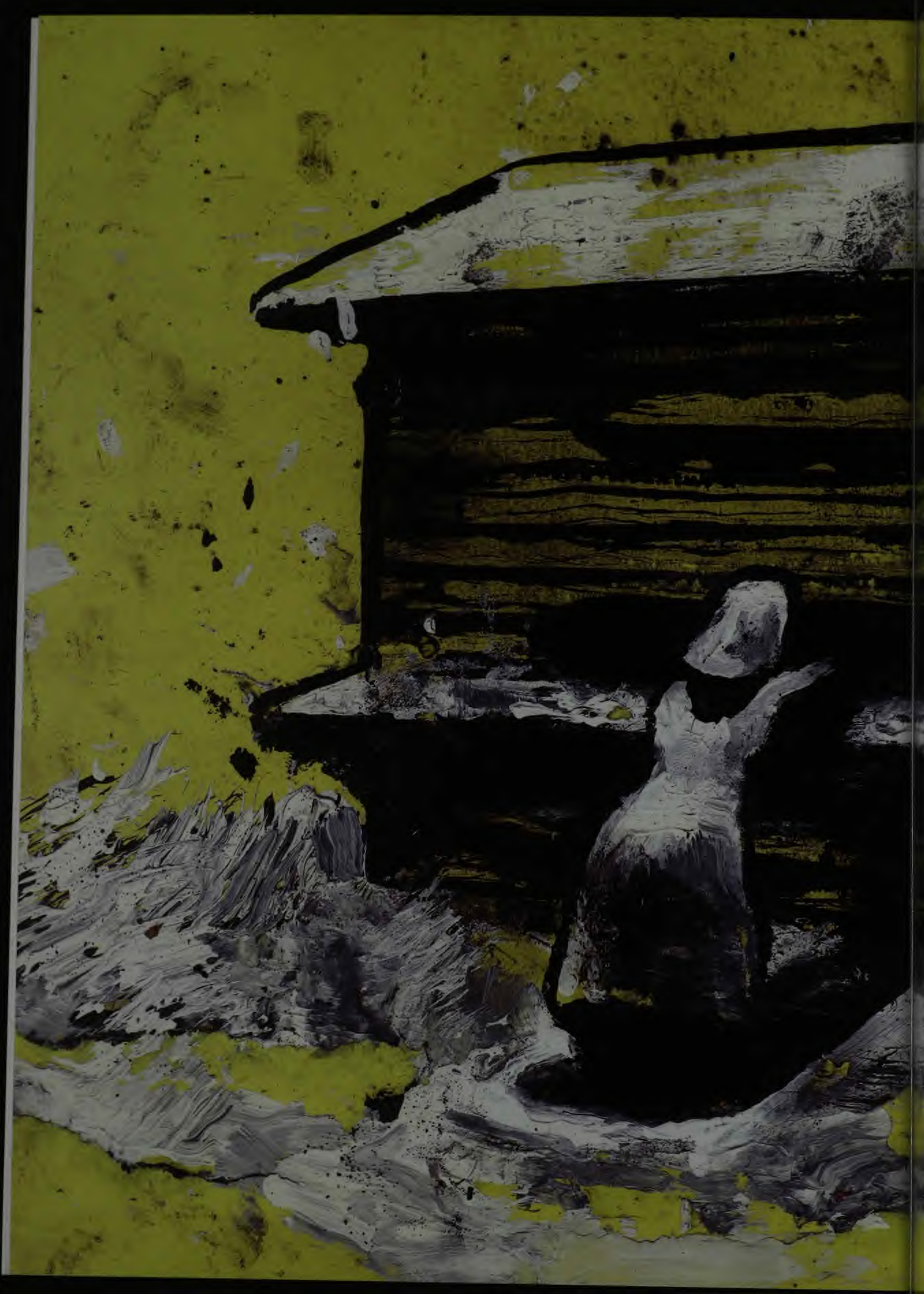
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L'editore è a disposizione degli aventi diritto per le fonti iconografiche
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at the borders of (film) history

Temporality, Archaeology, Theories

FilmForum/2014

XXI Convegno Internazionale
di Studi sul Cinema
XXI International
Film Studies Conference

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Questa pubblicazione è stata realizzata grazie al sostegno della Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia, della Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Gorizia e del Consorzio per lo Sviluppo del Polo Universitario, Gorizia.

La più viva gratitudine al Magnifico Rettore dell'Università degli Studi di Udine, al Direttore del Dipartimento di Storia e Tutela dei Beni Culturali, al Direttore del Dipartimento di Scienze Umane così come ai Direttori degli altri Dipartimenti dell'Area Umanistica e della Formazione.

Convegno internazionale di studi sul cinema, 21. <2014 ; Udine>

At the borders of (film) history : temporality, archaeology, theories : XXI Convegno internazionale di studi sul cinema = XXI International Film Studies Conference / a cura di = edited by Alberto Beltrame, Giuseppe Fidotta, Andrea Mariani. – Udine : Forum, 2015.

Atti del convegno tenuto a Udine, 2-4 aprile 2014. - Sul frontespizio: Filmforum/2014, Dipartimento di storia e tutela dei beni culturali, DAMS/Gorizia, Università degli studi di Udine - Testi anche in francese.

ISBN 978-88-8420-886-6

1. Cinema - Storia - Atti di congressi

I. Beltrame, Alberto II. Fidotta, Giuseppe III. Mariani, Andrea IV. Università degli studi di Udine. Dipartimento di storia e tutela dei beni culturali V. Università degli studi di Udine. DAMS <Gorizia>

791.4309 (WebDewey 2015) – CINEMA. Storia, geografia, persone

Scheda catalografica a cura del Sistema bibliotecario dell'Università degli studi di Udine

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The Boundless Borders of Film History

Traditionally, film historiography has been built within very defined borders whose structure until few decades ago no one would have seriously called into question. The classical form of the discipline of film studies, partially institutionalised through the entrance in the academia and its functional and productive consequences, encouraged practices such as canon-making, empirical research on positivist basis and auteurist reading that nowadays appear to many scholars as innocent and unworldly as the faint memories of a cheerful childhood. One might yet reply that such practices openly stand firm in more popular currents of film history, as the products of the established hybridisation of history and criticism still constitute the major incomes to every publisher of film-related books and film history as is still taught in academic courses has not changed that much in methods, scopes and aims since it first entered university curricula.¹ Apart from the long-time processes typical of university and the market, film history is nevertheless in a phase of sparkling uncertainty about its own future, a fact implying also a renewal, a sort of second take on its canonical features, that makes the current scenario to say the least exciting.

If asked to identify a relevant change in film historiography, few scholars would not mention the far-reaching and ground-breaking revolution occurred with the 1978 FIAF congress held in Brighton, a kind of primary scene when the epiphany of early cinema converted at least two generations of scholars to what will be labelled New Film History. In spite of the exaggerated emphasis surrounding the memory of the event, which begun to take the shape of a myth just a few years later on,² the importance of the New Film History's emergence – Brighton or not at its heart – has been acknowledged by almost every person who has tried to sketch the history of film history. In this respect, one of the movement's most valuable and influential virtues was the capability to impress a profound alteration to the ways in which film history had been conceived until then by getting the Foucauldian lesson circulating in academic debates. From the standpoint of early cinema re-discovery, film history suddenly became something opposite to the straight, paved, lighted road to the final accomplishment of a future cinema yet to come.³ On the contrary, the road took the shape of those steep, rugged, fre-

quently dead-ended paths that in fairy tales led to the place of the unknown, the darkness and the mystery. In more direct terms, New Film History discovered the pleasures and perils of notions such as discontinuity, epistemic break, cultural series, archaeology and genealogy already explained by Foucault some ten years before. This perspective is now considered as "a pioneering media archaeological approach"⁴ – a crucial step in criticising teleological historiography. The current *mediascape* has progressively shown the need of reconsidering each medium's identity as part of a network of media discourses. In this landscape, Media Archaeology represents a way of shaping and radicalising the debate: it "emphasizes the thingness of things" and underlines operational and performing possibilities while approaching an object of study.⁵

Due to its long and interdisciplinary tradition and the international network supporting it, FilmForum is seen as one of the most relevant annual conference in Europe in the domain of film and media studies. The XXI Udine International Film Studies Conference *At the Borders of (Film) History: Temporality, Archaeology, Theories* has represented an important step further in the conference's long-standing interests in many respects: historiography (*The Ages of Cinema*, 2007 edition, and *In the Very Beginning, at the Very End*, 2009 edition), canonization (*Film Style*, 2006 edition, and *The Film Canon*, 2010 edition) and archive theory (*The Archive*, 2011 edition, and the decennial work of the Spring School section *Film Heritage*). Moving from this tradition, the XXI Udine Conference hosted many prestigious international scholars seeking to liven up diverse contemporary debates around media with new sources coming from materialist, historicist, and realism-oriented backgrounds. As conference organisers, who had the chance to be supported in setting up the event by the fundamental contribution of Wanda Strauven, we took advantage of the sparkling atmosphere surrounding the actual media archaeology trend in film studies. In this perspective, the conference has been thought as an occasion to exchange different, sometimes contrasting views from at least three generations of film historians. This book collects and testifies those brilliant and unpredictable outcomes.

The volume is divided into five sections pivoting on five dichotomies, which want to emphasise the dialectical nature of the dialogue we attempted to dig for. Even though media archaeology seems to be nowadays the new orthodoxy in film studies, the dialectical approach we opt for has been aimed at underlining both contrasts and incongruities to scratch the surface of an apparently well-grounded, undisputed harmony. Surprisingly enough, the most concerned chapters with media archaeology, written by the same protagonists of this turn, are also the most critical, if not controversial, in dealing uncritically with that methodology. At the same time, the most empiricist, traditional chapters, whose approach does not share media archaeological anxieties, nonetheless prove an underground concern with the very same issues at the heart of media archaeology debate.

The volume is introduced by the first section – *Archaeology/Praxis* – which frames historically, contextually, and even lexically the media-archaeological approach. Zielinski and Strauven, whose roles in shaping the debate cannot be overlooked, offer from substantially different perspectives some guidelines to explore media archaeology's criticalities and eligible research opening. Targeting the same goal go the following chapters (van den Oever, Chateau, Christie), far more focused as they are on the role of the observer. Two crucial case studies (Somaini, De Rosa), then, close this first section through putting media archaeology into operational terms and stressing how its practices can be explored from cinema to exhibitions and museum-galleries.

The following section – *Time/Technology* – goes to the heart of the matter by problematising the issue of time (the "old-new" dialectics, time cyclic nature, discontinuity, fragmentation) and technology. Therefore, time-layers can be excavated *essentially* from technology, be the vantage point the opposition between film ontology and cinema archaeology (Elsaesser), the appropriation of new technologies for history-making (Kessler and Lenk, Lundemo, Olesen, Walbrou), epistemology and anthropology (Albera and Tortajada, Castro).

The third section – *Theory/History* – firmly stands for the impossibility of doing history of theory without a reflexive account of theory of history (when both history and theory could be read as plurals). To put it differ-

ently, there is no history without theory and vice versa. As aptly showed by the first essay (Gaines), those worries were the foundation of the so-called historical turn a few decades ago and still now must lead us to reframe the relentless evolution of the discipline (Gaudreault, Turquety), its volatile nature (Le Forestier, Arnoldy, Dasgupta) and its "militant" applications (Dall Asta, Locatelli).

The last two sections of the book have been meant as points of departure for evaluating how and when those approaches work operatively, although any chapter stems from clearly, easily identifiable theoretical concerns. The fourth one – *Archive/Society* – puts in contact the roles and functions of the archive and some sociologically informed standpoints which move from defining and defying the well-consolidated categories of film studies discourse (Hediger, Fanchi, Geil, Hoof), through stressing the empirical and philosophical dynamics of the archive (Einwächter, Lameris, Watkins), to finally recontextualising the nature of moving images' inscription and trace (Paci, Lauri-Lucente).

In conclusion, the fifth and last section – *Scale/Scope* – operates to close the circle at the point in which it started with the first one, that is, the point of how, where and to what depth excavations could be done in the process of making history. The matter of scale and scope, as we conceived it, is fundamentally linked to the lesson of *Annales* school's and Carlo Ginzburg's revolutionary approaches to historiography. Although few contributions explicitly address those frameworks, all of them are somehow indebted with microhistory, discourse analysis and typically 20th-century cultural paradigms. Thus, the evaluation of these paradigms (Hagener, Avezzù) goes hand in hand with their implementation of specific topics such as technology and production (Caneppele, Meandri, Simoni, Vernet), consumption and cultural impact (Moreno and Ortiz, Belloï), practical applications (Dicker, Berruti).

These last crucial chapters confirm the declared mission of the book – and previously of the Conference – which is the attempt to seriously and resolutely put together the theoretical premises and the operational consequences of making history. Contributors of this book came to stress how past-new media cultures are continuously resurfaced and can contribute to re-shape new uses, contexts, and adaptations of media research tools. Thus, re-framing the epistemological framework that we are keen to unfailingly and courageously question through these pages means to decrypt and excavate the formation of discourses and genealogies, digging the conditions and the present state of our own disciplinary apparatus with authentically heuristic and creatively insurgent philosophical spirit.

Notes

¹ See Dana Polan, *Scenes of Instructions: The Beginnings of the U.S. Study of Film*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2007; Lee Grieveson's, Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's, Mark Betz's and D. N. Rodowick's contributions in Lee Grieveson, Haydeen Wasson (eds.), *Inventing Film Studies*, Duke University Press, Durham 2008; André Gaudreault's, Vinzenz Hediger's and Sara Pesce's contributions in Anna Bertolli, Andrea Mariani, Martina Panelli (eds.), *Il cinema si impara?/Can We Learn Cinema?*, Proceedings of XIX Convegno Internazionale di Studi sul Cinema/International Film Studies Conference (Udine, 20-22 March 2012), Forum, Udine 2013.

² Philippe Gauthier, "L'Histoire amateur et l'histoire universitaire : Paradigmes de l'historiographie du cinéma," in *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 21, nos. 2-3, 2001, pp. 87-105 suggests that the Brighton myth had been already denounced by Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History," in *Sight and Sound*, vol. 55, no. 4, 1986, pp. 246-261; Tom Gunning, "Enigmas,

Understanding, and Further Questions: Early Cinema Research in Its Second Decade Since Brighton," in *Persistence of Vision*, no. 9, 1991, pp. 4-9; and more recently by William Uricchio, *Historicizing Media in Transition*, in Henry Jenkins, David Thorburn (eds.), *Rethinking Media Change. The Aesthetics of Transition*, MIT Press, Boston 2001, pp. 23-38, and André Gaudreault, *Il ritorno del pendolo, ovvero storia di un ritorno in forza... della Storia*, in Gian Piero Brunetta (ed.), *Storia del cinema mondiale*, vol. 5, Einaudi, Torino 2001, pp. 221-244.

¹ On the narrative of film historiography, and particularly on the debates over teleology, see Ira Bhaskar, "Historical Poetics," *Narrative, and Interpretation*, in Robert Stam, Toby Miller (eds.), *A Companion to Film Theory*, Blackwell, London 1999, pp. 387-412. See also André Gaudreault, Philippe Gauthier, *Le Discourse historiographique de Jacobs/Sadoul/Mitry: Canon de l'"historiographie traditionnelle" du cinéma*, in Pietro Bianchi, Giulio Bursi, Simone Venturini (eds.), *Il canone cinematografico/The Film Canon*, Proceedings of XVII Convegno Internazionale di Studi sul Cinema/International Film Studies Conference (Udine, 16-18 March 2010), Forum, Udine 2011, pp. 65-70.

⁴ Wanda Strauven, *Media Archaeology: Where Film History, Media Art, and New Media (Can) Meet*, in Julia Noordegraaf, Cosetta Saba, Barbara Le Maître, Vinzenz Hediger (eds.), *Preserving And Exhibiting Media Art. Challenges and Perspectives*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2013, p. 63.

⁵ Vivian Sobchack, *Afterword: Media Archaeology and Re-presencing the Past*, in Erkki Huhtamo, Jussi Parikka (eds.), *Media Archaeology. Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles 2011, pp. 323-333.



Archaeology/Praxis



Why and How Anarchaeology and Variantology of Arts and Media Can Enrich Thinking about Film and Cinema. Nine Miniatures

1. *Media are available in abundance/have become superfluous*

At the latest since the establishment of conditions based on a telematic monomedium by implementing the Internet as an individualised mass medium on a world-wide scale, it is no longer reasonable to assume that the latest, state-of-the-art-communications technology also represents the most advanced level of development in terms of civilisation. I began to elaborate this insight in the early 1990s, and it led me to undertake a search for constellations of the past in the present, which are more exciting and possibly more suitable for the future than contemporary ones. *The media* are neither a necessary nor an adequate reference point for the focus of this quest. Or, with respect to our theme here: cinema is neither the beginning nor the end of a specific technoculture and cultural technique which enables time-based images and sound to be created, recorded, processed, and experienced.

2. *Origin = future*

This quasi mathematical formula is frequently cited together with an abridged philosophical statement of Martin Heidegger's.¹ According to this, any work created is subject to the "Primat der Zukunft" (primacy of the future).² This does not have much to do with ecology, but a lot to do with exploitation. My idea of finding in the old (that which is past) that which is new (that is, what to come), indeed, of being able to find it,³ subjects this rhetorical and epistemic figure to a critical revision.

What we are doing, from the point of view of media archaeology, is liberating what is past from necessarily being directed toward or tending to a definite end, which is assigned to it in the present and for tomorrow. And at the same time we allow the machines of memory to operate as (re)generators. This is art and culture pro-

duction in energy-saving mode. By utilising and providing creative re-interpretations of past present-days, the avant-garde – if it is still acceptable to use this term – will become cutting edge, highly topical, even brilliant, if its proponents are able to shape this transformation process in an aesthetically convincing manner. Future is a recurring memory from outside, says the Berlin sociologist and philosopher Ulrich Sonnemann.

3. Time machine

Traditional historiography of film and cinema has long been out of date. The arts of sound and images in technical (re)production were not invented in the 19th century. The phases of the evolution of cognition and the development of this *dispositif* and form of expression extended over a far longer period. The 19th century can be defined as the consolidation period of an industrialisation and capitalism that was pervaded by media technologies, but not, however, as the epoch in which the interwoven relationship of arts, sciences, and technologies that interests us here began to unfold in a logic of multiplicities. Capitalism's project of industrialisation naturally included a diversity of media. Centralisation, universalisation, and standardisation were inscribed in it as processes. To press forward into the preceding time layers entails breaking out of the narrow confines that the media have produced in the course of developing their systemic functions, both in terms of concepts and of objects.

In accordance with the early archaeologies of cinema by Ceram (1965) and Friedrich von Zglinicky, or the pioneering cultural history studies of mechanisation by Sigfried Giedeon (1948) and René G. Hocke on Mannerism (1957), we grant the cinema and the speculative art of film a *deep time*, just as we have done for some time now for painting, sculpture, architecture, and music. Both technically and aesthetically cinema is a highly composite medium, and the film a synthetic and synthesising force of expression. In its concentrated form at the end of the 19th century it achieved a high point which led to its transformation into a widely used mass cultural technique. When one dismantles the phenomena into their component parts they can be easily accessed for an exploration of their deep time. The origin and development of projection, kinetics, *mise-en-scène* of sound and images, special effects, and serial narratives, for example, we can trace back and reconstruct over many centuries and in many different constellations of modernity in various regions of the world. In this way we can investigate and address developments vertically, like a time machine or ice core. Structuralism is not bad *per se*, only its dogmatic applications.

4. Dissolving the boundaries of diachrony

Moving into and through deep time corresponds on the horizontal plane to the evolution of a geological machine of heterogeneous cultures. Deep time and diversity of cultural origins are not only compatible. They are inevitably linked to each other and are mutually reinforcing. By seismographic prospecting in the depths of past present-days one not only leaves behind the focus on the metropolises in northern and western Europe, one moves towards the *mare internum* in the south, the Mediterranean, and the great mountain range in the east, the Ural. In fact one is located in a process that is mondial, co-determined by oriental cultures of knowledge as well as those of Africa, South and Central America, and the Islam-influenced traditions of the Middle East. Dissolving the boundaries of diachrony in the vertical corresponds to a dissolving of boundaries in the synchronous structure of the horizontal (fig. 1).

5. Anarchaeology and various genealogies

Methodologically it appears imperative to make some critical additions to the early archaeology of constellations of knowledge and power in Europe by Michel Foucault to arrive at a meta-method. In his later work the French historian and philosopher had undertaken steps in this direction himself by adapting Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of genealogy. During the 1990s I became convinced of the advantages of a method of analysis for my own work, which was not primarily concerned with identifiable origins and teleological objectives, but instead gave free rein to the phenomena, events, and processes that are the subjects of interest. From the idiosyncratic and cumbersome *anarchaeology*⁴ there developed increasingly individual genealogies – for example, of the *theologi electrici*, the electrical theologists of the Enlightenment (2006 and 2010), of the interactions of *Krieg und Medien* (war and media) (2009), of projection as an archaic technical and aesthetic action located somewhere between *Entwerfen und Entbergen* (designing and revealing, 2010), of Vilém Flusser and Martin Heidegger, and of an expanded concept of animation as a cultural technology for *en-souling* dead matter (*Expanded Animation*, 2013). Variantology, which we have been developing for the last ten years, can also be understood as an imaginary sum total of all possible genealogies of particular phenomena (fig. 2).

The semantic field of the Variantology concept possesses for us positive connotations as a matter of principle. To be different, to differ, to change, to alternate are some of the translations of the Latin verb *variare*. They only tip over into the negative when they are voiced by a strong subject and used as a means of exclusion, which the delicate neologism Variantology actually cannot tolerate. To vary something that already exists is an alternative to destroying it, something that played a very important role in the various avant-gardes of the 20th century (including the experimental cinema avant-garde) but is now obsolete as a model ever since the destruction taking place in the real has become so successful and continues apace without being checked hardly at all. And, naturally, a media format also resonates in the Variantology concept. Long before cinema was invented variety shows experimented with combining different types of stage performance into a colourful whole, which only came together for the length of a particular show.

6. For example, the eye/vision

Two cuts have decisively shaped the history of vision. Both were cuts through the eye of a cow. The first cut was made because anatomical experiments on human bodies were forbidden by early Islam – the same as in early Christianity. Eleven centuries separate the two cuts. The second cut, well known to cinephiles, is the one staged by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí in *Un chien andalou* (1929) in parallel to the horizontal cut of a cloud through the full moon. The idea was that henceforth, seeing in the cinema would never be quite the same again (this cut through the eye was accompanied on a philosophical level by Georges Bataille's "other" *L'Histoire de l'œil* (1928) in which the eye of a priest is torn out and implanted in the genitals of the novel's female protagonist) (fig. 3).

The first cut was practised by Arab physicians in the early 9th century. In conjunction with the knowledge gained through experiments it led to spectacular knowledge, such as understanding the eye as a complex receiver for visual data and linking the process of seeing with brain activity to form judgements; that is, to a view of visual perception that is essentially neurological. The technical experiments of the early 11th century that were developed on the basis of this anatomical research included dark chambers for observing special light effects on a projection screen as well as instruments for the geometrical study of light refraction.

In summary and in short, in the operative terms of an archaeology of media, knowledge about vision, optics, and visual perception can be divided into five periods:

1. The Pre-Socratics and atomists among the Greek natural philosophers (Empedocles, Democritus, Lucretius) imagine vision as sensory and reciprocal in the form of a permanent exchange of energy between what is seen and who is seeing. The division of the world into that which suffers and that which is active (object-subject) did not as yet exist.
2. There was a marked idealisation of vision in the second period of Hellenistic thought. In *Timaeus*, Plato linked vision to cognition, which he reinforced politically and philosophically in his Allegory of the Cave. Aristotle opposed both Empedocles' theory of reciprocity as well as the sensory arguments of the atomists' concepts and defined the eye as the privileged sense for the disclosure of the world. Aristotle understood vision as the only *active* sense, and it could be splendidly associated with Euclid's visual ray theory. This connection became the dominant concept in Christian-occidental culture for the next twelve to thirteen centuries.
3. Building on the work of Galen, Arab oculists re-established the close connection between vision and the perceiving and cognising body. Ibn al-Haytham's reception-oriented concept linked to the science of projecting three-dimensional bodies in the form of atomised points of light into the dark chamber of the eye and was an important stimulus for the development of perspective in Europe in the late Middle Ages.
4. Bacon, Peckham, and Witelo studied al-Haytham, for they were intent on rescuing Plato's idealised view and also on helping to develop the ideas of perspective representation. Central perspective was their mathematical, geometrical formulation, which is basically concerned with the controllability and (re)constructability of the world.
5. With Maurolico, Kepler, and Descartes the circle of classical natural philosophy came to a logical endpoint, and at the same time modern science, with its various differentiated approaches to phenomena and techniques of the visual, began its ascent. The upside-down world that is precisely calculated in the image on the retina, is inverted and corrected in such a way that it becomes suitable for productions and reproductions of every kind.

Jean-Louis Baudry and the other apparatus theorists of the early 1970s will probably appreciate this: two of the outstanding concepts concerning vision and visual perception were developed with an eye towards the cave or even from within the cave: Plato's *The Republic* and al-Haytham's book on optics, which he is said to have written during a period of dark house arrest in Cairo. The next boundary-shifting insights with respect to visual perception would only surface around one thousand years later in the field of research that engages with the question of how the blind can be made to see. Here the visual organ is no longer required as a medium; it is replaced by machines that simulate visual stimuli for the brain. Visual perception operates via a direct connection to the brain's visual capacities. This will become neuro-cinema in the literal sense of the term.

7. For example, the ear/listening

In the beginning was the articulated sound maintains the god of European avant-garde cinema, Jean-Luc Godard, like a good literalist catholic, since the early 1980s when, after many years of working with the electronic notebook of video, he started to make films again for the cinema and ransacked his record cabinet for wonderful concertos, symphonies, and songs – from Mozart's "Magic Flute" to Leonard Cohen's/Federico García Lorca's bombastic and wonderful Vienna-kitsch "Take this Waltz"/"Little Viennese Waltz." Currently, the most widely accepted of the competing theories to explain how the universe developed is the Big Bang. In this cosmological model there are powerful echoes of archaic mythological material. With this violent event, structure came into being out of the unformed blackness of infinite matter, out of sound and light, out of waves

that were so strong that they pulled everything apart. "Both the creation myths of indigenous peoples and the cosmogonies of Afro-Asiatic cultures mention a dark overall sound as the mother of the demiurge."⁵ For the ethnologist and musicologist Marius Schneider, whose special field is hunting for sounds, rhythms, melodies, and musical structures in stone structures and architecture, gods are "pure sound." Some of the first known imaginings of angel-like beings, for example, as found in Brahman creation myths, were "transparent and radiant beings that made sounds and flew above the Earth. But when they came down to Earth and began to eat plants, they lost their lightness and their luminescence. Their bodies lost their transparency and all that remained of their original substance were their voices."⁶ The heliotropic beings mutated into heterotrophs, who from that point onward had to ingest vast quantities of material generated by the sun in order to survive. They learned to speak and to organise their rituals effectively. The word, the sound articulated in a proper form, became the most important means of expression for organised effects and, in this restricted sense, reality. Sounds were structured harmoniously and became music. As such, what is audible is grammar, structure with recognisable rules – mathematical, geometrical, physical, and physiological. This is what murmurs inside the pneumatic off-voices in the cinema, from Jean-Luc Godard to Alexander Kluge (fig. 4).

In the second volume of his *Tractatus* on the history of the macrocosm and microcosm, *De naturae simia seu technica macrocosmi historia* (Frankfurt/Oppenheim, 1618), an in every sense grand-format hermetic work, in Chapter IV of Book 4, *Of Numbers and the Harmony of Inner Man*, Robert Fludd cites the Greek-Syrian philosopher Iamblichus Chalcidensis (ca. 245-325) and his idea that the human soul has the capacity to hear divine harmony; that the soul quasi remembers this structure because it antedates the microcosmic world of the individual human being. In his interpretation of Iamblichus' ideas, later characterised as Neoplatonic, Fludd emphasises the corporeality of humans in connection with the functioning of memory. The biological body becomes a storage of information when he writes "The human soul, its dark inner space once permeated by divine harmony, resides in physical man, who not only preserves the memory of a cosmic symphony within himself, but also the idea of the divine One; this is why humans are most wonderfully moved by simple, common music"⁷ (fig. 5).

Keyboard of the Emotions: the intellectual father of affect-oriented and affect-charged media concepts at the transition from the Middle Ages to the early modern era – and later to European modernism – was Ignatius of Loyola, the Basque founder of the Jesuit order, which embodied the quasi-militarily organised avant-garde of the Vatican. Loyola was their first General. His famous *Exercitia spiritualia*, the "Spiritual Exercises," were only initially and superficially developed as instructions for self-martyrdom and self-castigation; they served – and still serve – primarily as a guide to immersion in prayer and meditation. As constructed fictions they are consummate Aristotelian aesthetics in the form of written instructions, which read like the script of a thriller. The purification of the emotions is effected by imagining terror, torture, hell, and by ritualising them through making them recur in an elliptical loop – the most important rhetorical figure.⁸

At least two sources can be identified as strong influences on St. Ignatius' world of perception. Both are domains that are associated with sound and are replete with simple musical structures. The older source is the adaptation of the biblical *Jacob's Ladder* by St. John Climacus (7th century), abbot of the monastery on Mount Sinai. His *Ladder of Divine Ascent* describes how the soul can be purified by imagining an arduous ascent on a steep ladder (*scala*), full of privation, to the highest point (*klimax*) of metaphysical experience: the encounter with God Almighty. Expressed in musical terms Climacus' *Ascent* is a dramatised scale (*sonorum gradus*). With their *Stairway to Heaven* (1971) Led Zeppelin created an affirmative monument to the scale in the history of rock music; Arnold Schoenberg failed – but superbly – in his attempt to bend the ladder into an endless hamster wheel, and he never finished his oratorio *Jacob's Ladder* in spite of the many years' work he had invested in it (fig. 6).

The second source of inspiration for St. Ignatius were certain currents of piety that were particularly prominent in the Flemish tradition of the Late Middle Ages. Jean, or Jan, Mombaer (d. 1502) was one of its most distinguished representatives. In his major work on spiritual exercises and religious meditations, published in the 15th century, there is a curious engraving showing a large crucifix with the divine light of God radiating out of the intersection of the upright and crossbar. Above this there is a depiction of a strange musical instrument:

The mystic cantichord resembles an extremely simplified harpsichord. It has five strings which are presumably each tuned to a different pitch. Each string has a key showing a different vowel of the Greek alphabet. The cross depicted beneath it provides us with the solution to the code: the vowels correspond to particular attributes of God that in the Roman Catholic faith are axiomatic (an-archaeologists of media are familiar with such axioms being represented by letters of the Latin alphabet from the great art of combination described in his *Ars magna* by the Catalan monk Ramon Llull (1235/6-1316)). *A* is associated with God's goodness, *E* with omnipotence, *I* with mercy, *O* with freedom, and *U* with wisdom and justice. Linked with these in the process of prayer are qualities of emotional experience, which Mombaer summarised as follows: "A is joyful and loving, E hopes, I shows compassion, O is afraid, U feels pain and hates [confronted by sin]: you must remember this!"⁹ (fig. 7).

Since the Middle Ages such axiomatically founded aesthetics of command has been the basis of all apparatuses and devices that are bent on effectively catching souls unawares. The psyche has become malleable material. The grammar of the formulation is kept as simple as possible. The colour organs of the 19th century, too, were based on this idea; in addition to musical notes they worked with certain colours that had specific affective connotations. The young Arthur Rimbaud crowned this achievement poetically by composing *Sonnet des voyelles* in which he assigned a different colour to each vowel. Today's discos and clubs work with substrata of such poetic concepts. Armies of designers develop standardised sound-image relationships as triggers for the soul (and as openers for the visitors' wallets).

Let us briefly draw an analogy with the cut through the eye of a cow performed by Arab oculists. The geographical and political hot spot of knowledge culture during the *âge d'or* of Arab-Islamic science was the *Bait al-hikma*, the House of Wisdom in 9th-century Baghdad. Its founder, Calif Al-Ma'mun (813-833), is credited with facilitating many translations of Ancient Greek texts on natural philosophy and encouraging young scholars who were hungry for knowledge to think for themselves and develop an experimental approach to the world.¹⁰

Among those who profited from this unrivalled institution were the brothers Muhammad, Ahmad, and al-Hasan, sons of Musa bin Shakir, who formed a minimal cooperative that encompassed an entire universe of scientific qualifications: mathematics and geometry, astronomy, natural philosophy, medicine, music, and the engineering arts. The three have gone down in the history of science and technology as the Banu Musa. Of these three princes Ahmad in particular is considered an engineer of genius and he is thought to be the principal author of *Kitab al-Hiyal* (*Book of Ingenious Devices*) of the mid-9th century. This compendium is filled with sketches and precise building instructions for one hundred models (*shakl*) of various artefacts, devices and their components, kinetic sculptures and automata – automaton here meaning automotive artificial device: hydraulic and mechanical scooping automata and drinking fountains, pneumatically driven animals that make sounds, self-feeding oil lamps that automatically refill themselves and also move their wind shield so that the flame is protected at all times and can theoretically burn forever.¹¹

That something can be in constant motion without a pause seems to have been very important to the Banu Musa. One of their masterpieces has this feature; it is not included in the extant copies of the *Book of Ingenious Devices*, but all the leading authorities on the history of Arab-Islamic science attribute it to the prince Ahmad. The text was originally in the library of the Three Moons monastic school in Beirut, which belonged to the

Greek Orthodox Church. It appears to have been a solitary manuscript, and was stolen by some militant Christian gangs in the 19th century. A description of the manuscript was rediscovered by George Farmer in 1931, which refers to a translation of the text by the French orientalist Louis Cheikho.¹²

It starts by giving a description of a continuously playing flute player. "The instrument that plays by itself" (*Alalat illati tuzammir binafsiha*) is what the Banu Musa called their musical device, emphasising its automatic character. The title also indicates that they ascribed a universal significance to the technology they outline in their description; clearly they wanted this invention to be understood independently and not only in conjunction with its specific implementation in the model of the flute player (fig. 8).

Hydraulically operated and pneumatically driven birds and flute players appear in ancient Chinese literature as well as in Ancient Greek texts, for example, by Archimedes, Appollonius, and Hero of Alexandria. The technically advanced solutions for propulsion are attributed to Appollonius. He developed an ingenious hydraulic pump system whereby his anthropomorphic figure plays the flute continuously as long as water flows into the mechanism. A kind of circular construction in which a second water tank filled while the first emptied its contents and pressed out the air for the flute player ensured that the automaton literally had a constant supply of energy.¹³

The three princes from the House of Wisdom in Baghdad not only developed and improved on hydraulic and pneumatic mechanisms, they described and built a music automaton that was capable of varying rhythms and that could be fed with different melodies. The inventors' intention is cited by George Farmer in his translation of parts of the manuscript: "We wish to explain how an instrument [...] is made which plays by itself continuously in whatever melody [...] we wish, sometimes in a slow rhythm [...] and sometimes in a quick rhythm, and also that we may change from melody to melody when we so desire."¹⁴

The heart of the automaton is a hydraulically driven cylinder. On the surface of the cylinder are bands made of wood or metal, which carry small protruding pins of different lengths. Depending on how these pins are positioned on the bands and how the bands are arranged in relation to one another, a mechanical translation opens or closes the valve of the flute, an organ pipe, or moves another sound-producing element. *Prographiein* means to prescribe. The way the pins are arranged on the cylinder formulate the musical instructions, they are the *programme* of the instrument; the pins and bands are notation translated into hard material. The hardware is virtually identical to the revolving cylinders with pins that were used 500 years later in the European glockenspiel of the late Middle Ages, and even later again in the mechanical organs of the Renaissance, as well as for the writing automata and automatic music instruments of the Age of Enlightenment (fig. 9).

8. Expanded animation

Animation can be interpreted historically simply as a cinematographic or film genre. In this case we are looking at a 120 to 150 years-old history that is brimming with curiosities but confined to cinema and film. However, if we think of animation within the context of an expanded phylum of living apparatuses or machines mimicking life functions, then we discover a fascinating fabric of themes, which for me is associated with extraordinary objects, writers, artists, and inventors. This world full of bachelor machines and mechanical brides (Marcel Duchamp) is populated by dolls and dummies, mannequins, masters with marionettes and shadow puppeteers, masques and *travesti*. They have either fallen victim to the Pygmalion effect or have made the seductively beautiful artifices their obsessive *raison d'être*.

One of their greatest European heroes is the Polish poet and artist Bruno Schulz (1892-1942), who celebrates a fantastic re-animation in the filmic oeuvre of the Brothers Quay. The protagonists of his *Zimtläden*

("Cinnamon Shops:" a collection of stories, including one of the same name, published in English as "Street of Crocodiles") are artificial beings, shop-window mannequins, seductive anthropomorphic clothes stands, and mythical creatures that Schulz awakens to phantasmal life. While Schulz was describing his mannequins in the small Galician town of Drohobycz, then part of Austro-Hungary, now in the Ukraine, Felisberto Hernández (1902-1964) was engaging with his own in faraway Uruguay. With comparable poetic intensity and in a style that literary critics have called "magic realism," Hernández, writer, pianist, and casual worker, was writing a novella about the "hortensias," as he called the graceful shop window dummies. "Hortensia," Hernández's name for these artificial beauties, is in fact the second name of the protagonist's beloved wife Maria and of the author's mother in her youth.¹⁵

Hans Bellmer, who came originally from Katowice in Poland, studied engineering at the Technical University Berlin in the 1920s. In 1933 he began his curious Pygmalion project. Using wood and black human hair he constructed in a small ground-floor apartment at Ehrenfelsstrasse 8, Berlin-Karlshorst, a beguiling doll "as non-acceptance of Fascism and the prospect of war: cessation of all socially beneficial activities," Bellmer announced. The first version of the doll of 1934 contains a media device. The doll's stomach, which otherwise "has no function at all," is an automatic peep-show. A push button on the doll's left breast activates a rotating panorama. Through the navel the voyeuristic gaze can see shameless, technically produced images. However, the entire object is an animation. In 1948, after ten years in exile in Paris, Bellmer broke his long silence (and ended the period of being hushed up) by writing about his project in a brochure entitled *Les Jeux de la poupée / Die Spiele der Puppe* (The Games of the Doll). His text focuses on the mechanisms and ball joints of the kinetic artefact, whose precursors Bellmer locates in the automatons of Byzance and even Jewish mysticism: "the construction of the device resembles that of an incense thurible, which rotates as it is swung but still remains in balance." In the opening sentences, which were probably written before the outbreak of World War II, Bellmer gives an intriguing interpretation of his project, which also contains his particular conception of "homo ludens."¹⁶

Games belong to the genre of experimental poetry; thus toys could be called poetry-arousers. The best games do not necessarily seek to result in anything; rather, their passions become inflamed at the thought of their own unknown continuation like a promise. Thus the best toys are those which are incognizant of any pre-determined way of functioning that is always the same; toys so rich in possibilities and flukes, like the humblest rag-doll, and challenging, like a divining rod, which confront the world in order to hear the feverish answers here or there to what has always been expected, that anyone is capable of repeating: the sudden pictures of the "you"¹⁷ (fig. 10).

Bruno Schulz and Hans Bellmer, the Polish poet of the mannequins and the Polish artist, are just two examples that convey an inkling of the complexity that attaches to an expanded concept of animation. To stay with the Polish tradition of the 12th century, the theatre director Tadeusz Kantor, with his *Machine of Love and Death* (1987),¹⁸ is definitely a part of it. The essay by Heinrich von Kleist on the Marionette Theatre has become a bible of the animators of the real, as well as Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann's story *The Sandman* (1817) with its sensational artificial heroine Olympia. Villier de L'Isle Adam's *L'Eve future*, written in the 1880s, belongs to it, as well as Thomas Alva Edison's phonographic talking doll. The first avant-garde of the 20th century followed up this fascination with the artificial of the industrial age. In Marcel Duchamp's *The Large Glass*, a.k.a. *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-1923) the lower part of *The Bachelor Machine* with its "chocolate grinder" at the centre consists of imaginary *ensouled* machines, like the upper *Domain of the Bride*. With his *Ipsation Machine* of 1972 filmmaker Jan Svankmajer clearly linked up with the work of Duchamp. In the art of the second half of the 20th century "the games with the doll" (Bellmer), from the travesties of Pierre

Molinier to photo artists like Jürgen Klauke and Cindy Sherman, became an independent sub-genre where artists engaged with living artifices and the mechanisms of life.

A branch of the phylum that has so far been explored even less is the movable doll-like figures that archaeologists have traced back to ancient Egypt. "Primitive animism may lie at the very root of animation," writes Derek de Solla Price in a 1964 essay in connection with Indonesian shadow puppetry that was moved by leather straps.¹⁹ In the Christian West there is a strong and rich tradition of creating figural simulacra, for example, substitutes for Christ as a child or various saints that can be touched by the devout. These effigies were carved from wood with great care and devotion, painted, decorated, and *ensouled* in many ways through being used by worshippers. One region that has an abundance of variations and a veritable cult surrounding these doll-like objects is southern Italy and Sicily. They have a strong physical presence and overt sexual connotations. So far, art history has only treated these artefacts as images, but neglected them as three-dimensional haptic sensations (figg. 11-12).

9. The end / beginning again

In order to secure a rich future for filmic creation, it is very necessary that we allow the objects of our desire as researchers a past that is just as rich and multifarious as we hope the future will be. Methodologically I would go even further: it is logical to couple the desired diversity and heterogeneity that marches with the arrow of time pointing forward with the confusing multiplicities of past and submerged present-days. Anarchaeology of media, in the way that I practise it with great enthusiasm, is basically a special type of game with potentialities, with spaces of possibility. Just as we are little inclined to accept a future that is pre-programmed technologically, we are not in agreement with historians or physicists who see history as a collection of given columns of facts that must be ploughed through in a linear fashion. At the beginning of Parts 2A and 2B of his *Histoire(s) du cinema*, Godard writes the film title with an annoyingly squeaky, thick felt-tip pen on a white box from his production company, Sonimage. The first sentence in the shot declares: "The work of the historian is to offer a precise description of that which never happened."

Within the comfort of a time-space machine that operates vertically and horizontally, diachronously and synchronously, we shall also be able to concentrate on what is most important in the future: the *ars magna lucis et umbrae*, the great art of light and shadow, which was already a very effective programme at the Jesuit College in Rome 370 years ago.

The majority of Western philosophies of time, including that of the Black Forest catholic Martin Heidegger, are philosophies of *angst*, of anxiety and fear. A philosophy of confidence and optimism does not exclude melancholy, but as a principle it claims the freedom to sheer away from the endless rings orbiting Saturn and steal a march on any death fall. Cinema can achieve this – in the form of a world that is constantly re-invented anew, for it only exists in the projection.

Illustrations

1. Wind trading = stocks and shares trading. On their shoulders the misers whose religion is Mammon carry the universe. After the stock market crash of 1720 in France, England, and the Netherlands, investors who had lost money called the stock dealers traders in illusions or wind traders. In the famous *Atlas Kegelspel* the term "traders of wind" is also used to refer to laterna magica projectionists. From *Het groote tafereel der dwaasheid* (1720), *Atlas Kegelspel*, in the Werner Nekes Collection (see Siegfried Zielinski, Silva Wagnermaier (eds.), *Variantology 1*, Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln 2005, pp. 142-144; many thanks to Werner Nekes).
2. The Ship as a Nut Shell. The Brothers Quay found this beautiful image to illustrate the activities of the variantologists (frontispiece for Siegfried Zielinski, Eckhard Füllus, *Variantology 4*, Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln 2009).
3. Anatomical model by the Arab eye doctor Abu Zayd ibn Ishaq al-Tbadi (808-ca. 873) in *Anatomy of the Eye* by Al-Mutadibih, manuscript ca. 1200, described in detail in *Variantology 4*, cit.
4. Robert Fludd's conception of the harmonious unity of the little earthling and the universe, of the microcosm and macrocosm, superbly visualised by the copperplate engraver Johann Theodore de Bry, Fludd's publisher from Germany.
5. Here God appears to ejaculate directly into the water-powered organ and drive it. From Robert Fludd's history of the macrocosm and microcosm: *Tractatus secundus. De naturae simia seu technica macrocosmi historia*, Frankfurt-Oppenheim 1618.
6. "And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put *them* for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it" (Genesis 28,10-12). The illustration shows Herrad von Landsberg's (d. ca. 1196) ladder of virtue, *Hortus deliciarum* (garden of delights/desires). Archive of Siegfried Zielinski.
7. The canticord of the Flemish theologian J(e)an Mombaer from his work *Rosetum exercitiorum spiritalium et sacrarum meditationum*, etching from a late 16th-century edition; taken here from Alain Guillerrou, *Ignatius von Loyola Rowohlt*, Rowohlt, Reinbek 1962, p. 72.
8. Perpetually playing music automaton (8a): the hydraulic-pneumatic components (drawing by George Farmer, 1931); (8b): a modern reconstruction of the pinned cylinder's mechanism which opens and closes the valve of a flute by the Institute for the History of Arab-Islamic Sciences at the Goethe University of Frankfurt (photo: Zielinski).
9. Hydraulic organ: water-driven pinned cylinder to operate an organ. Engraving by Salomon de Caus, 1615. This design was still being built in the 18th century. Archive of Siegfried Zielinski.
10. Bellmer in a double exposure with his first model (1934) as a wooden skeleton, the doll with the voyeristic peep-show inside her stomach; in *Jeux de la Poupée* which Bellmer published with texts by Paul Éluard in 1949; here from *cnacarchives - bellmer* (Paris 1971), p. 12.
11. "The Little King:" an artificial baby Jesus of painted wood with glass eyes and natural fibre for hair, created as a cute object of religious passion and longing; southern Italy, late 18th century. Source: Marco Rapuzzi, Chiara Basta (eds.), *Il Bambino Gesù*, Grafo, Brescia 1997, p. 59.
12. Human-size nude kinetic jointed doll of a saint, 17th century, probably from western Italy or France. "The head has eyes made by reverse painting on glass and it is *animated* through air holes bored through the nose and mouth." Source: Jan Gerchow (Ed.), *Ebenbilder*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern-Ruit 2002, p. 255.

Notes

- ¹ "Herkunft bleibt stets Zukunft" [Origin is always the future], in Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, Neske, Pfullingen 1959, p. 96 (International ed. *On the Way to Language*, HarperCollins, New York 1982).
- ² See Claude Ozankom, *Herkunft bleibt Zukunft*, Philosophische Schriften Band 26, Berlin 1998, particularly Chapter II. 1., 36ff.
- ³ For a detailed discussion of this subject see Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media*, trans. G. Custance, MIT Press, Boston, MA 2006.
- ⁴ In his later Paris lectures, which have only recently been published, Michel Foucault used this neologism with its connotations of archaeology and anarchy. At the end of a passage that takes a critical look at his method he remarks "thus I am saying to you that what I am proposing to you is more a kind of anarchaeology" ("also sage ich ihnen, dass das, was ich ihnen vorschlage, eher eine Art Anarchäologie ist"); quotation from the German translation of Michel Foucault, *Du gouvernement des vivants / Die Regierung der Lebenden. Vorlesungen am Collège de France 1979-1980*, trans. Andrea Hemminger, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 2014, p. 115.
- ⁵ Marius Schneider, *Singende Steine. Rhythmus-Studien an drei katalanischen Kreuzgängen Romanischen Stils*, Bärenreiter, Kassel-Basel 1955, p. 12.
- ⁶ *Idem*, p. 14.
- ⁷ Robert Fludd, *Tractatus theologo-philosophicus*, vol. II (Tomus Secundus), Oppenheim, 1617.
- ⁸ For a detailed account see: Siegfried Zielinski, *Modelling Media for Ignatius Loyola. A Case Study on Athanasius Kircher's World of Apparatus between the Imaginary and the Real*, in Eric Kluitenberg (ed.), *Book of Imaginary Media, Excavating the Dream of the Ultimate Communication Medium*, NAi Publishers, Amsterdam 2006, pp. 29-55.
- ⁹ "A gaudens amat, E sperat, sed I miseretur; O timet Uque dolens odit: et ista notes." Quoted in Alain Guillerrou's biography of Ignatius of Loyola, published 1960 in Paris; in German: Alain Guillerrou, *Ignatius von Loyola*, Rowohlt, Reinbek 1962, p. 70.
- ¹⁰ See Henry George Farmer, *The Organ of the Ancients: From Eastern Sources (Hebrew, Syriac and Arabic)*, William Reeves, London 1931, p. 55.
- ¹¹ The most reliable source on the work of the Banu Musa besides the texts by Eilhard Wiedemann is still Donald R. Hill's translation and commentary, *The Book of Ingenious Devices (Kitab al-Hiyal) by the Banu (sons of) Musa bin Shakir*, Springer Science & Business Media, Dordrecht 1979. See also our volume Siegfried Zielinski, Eckhard Furler (eds.), *Variantology 4*, König, Köln 2009, which is dedicated to the *âge d'or* of Arab-Islamic knowledge cultures.
- ¹² Reproduced in volume 9 of the periodical *Al-Mashriq. Revue Catholique Orientale Bimensuelle*, Imprimerie Catholique, Beyrouth 1906.
- ¹³ See Eilhard Wiedemann, *Über Musikautomaten*, in Oskar Schulz (ed.), *Sitzungsberichte der physikalisch-medizinischen Sozietät in Erlangen*, vol. 46, 1914 (Max Mencke, Erlangen 1915).
- ¹⁴ Quoted in Henry George Farmer, *The Organ of the Ancients*, cit., p. 88; the Arabic characters, which Farmer put in parentheses, are not included here. The preceding quotations are also from this book.
- ¹⁵ Frank Graziano, *The Lust of Seeing: Themes of the Gaze and Sexual Rituals in the Fiction of F. Hernandez*, Associated University Presses, Cranbury, NJ 1997, p. 201.
- ¹⁶ Johann Huizinga held his inaugural speech as rector on this theme in 1933 in Leyden, and in 1938 his book of the same title was published.

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¹⁷ Hans Bellmer in the Foreword to *Les Jeux de la poupée / Die Spiele der Puppe*, Editions Premieres, Paris 1949; in German: Hans Bellmer, *Die Puppe*, Gerhardt Verlag, Berlin 1962, quotations pp. 52, 49, details p. 188f. In the French version of the text the delightful expression "Poesie-Erreger" (poetry-arouser) is not included.

¹⁸ This is also the title of a catalogue published by the Marionette Museum in Palermo, Sicily, in honour of the Polish master of the theatre.

¹⁹ Derek De Solla Price, *Automata and the Origins of Mechanism and Mechanistic Philosophy*, in *Technology and Culture*, vol. V, no. 1, Winter 1964, pp. 9-23.

The (Noisy) Praxis of Media Archaeology

How to use a mechanical slide projector

One of the most memorable moments of *Mad Men*'s first season (2007) is without doubt, for a media archaeologist at least, the demonstration of the circular slide projector by Don Draper: in the semi-darkness of a (smoky) meeting room, in front of the Kodak executives, he projects photographic images of his own "happy family" onto the wall. The typical clicking and humming sound of the mechanical slide projector accompanies his voice, when he pitches the name "Carousel" (as alternative for "The Wheel," coined by the Kodak executives). Thanks to the circular form of its tray, the slides are disposed and organized into an endless show allowing the viewers to travel through time "like a child travels around and around and back home again to a place where we know we are loved."¹

Despite its technical improvements and its attractive round form, the Kodak Carousel never entirely replaced the straight-tray slide projectors that were already on the market. But the merry-go-round model did find its way to the museum as continuously looping presentation tool. And it is precisely in the museum that the slide projector, still today, seems to resist obsolescence. Elsewhere it has become a relic of the past. Software programs like PowerPoint and Keynote (and, even more, the numerous photo sharing applications of social network sites) gradually banned the mechanical slide projector from both the home and the classroom, not to mention weddings and funerals, business meetings and academic conferences.

Since Kodak decided, in 2009, to stop producing (and processing) its legendary film for color slides, Kodachrome, the manufacturing of slide frames or slide mounts has also been discontinued by most photography companies. The slide mount is a peculiar little object that comes (or at least existed) in different materials, ranging from cardboard and plastic to metal. It is a two-layered square with a window made of very thin glass. The photographic image, called slide or transparency, is placed between the two glass layers of the frame. The standard size for 35mm film is a frame of 2 x 2 inch (approximately 50mm x 50mm) with a rectangular

opening (usually 34mm x 23mm). Depending on its orientation into the projector, the framing results either horizontal (landscape) or vertical (portrait). Some types of frames would also come without glass; and the cardboard ones would be glued together not allowing for reuse (i.e. mounting new images).

As a child I remember helping my father framing some of his countless architecture slides, which he made for teaching purposes. I also remember that I preferred the glassless mounts to the windowed ones because the latter (too) often captured dust particles, eyelashes or fingerprints between the glass plate and the slide. This "disadvantage" of the double-glass slide frame is the working principle of the so-called direct projections experimented since the late 1950s by Italian artist Bruno Munari – a practice he repeated later on with elementary school kids as part of his educational laboratories.

Bruno Munari (1907-1998) is the inventor of the "useless machine" (*macchina inutile*), which he conceived in the early 1930s during his Futurist period.² Over the years, Munari dedicated himself to all forms of artistic practices, from mobile sculpture to abstract painting, from experimental xerography and cinema to industrial design. He also became a very productive illustrator and writer of children's books, and designer of toys and didactic games. Influenced by the theory of active learning as promoted by John Dewey (among others), Munari introduced the phenomenon of hands-on laboratories for children not only into the school context, but also into the world of the museum.

Direct projections are very typical for Munari's operational (or creative) mind. The slides are *slideless* slides, that is, slide mounts without photographic slides; instead they contain concrete/tangible compositions made of little pieces of plastic, all types of fabric, paper, etc. The concept is very simple: you open the slide mount, place the selected material between the two glass plates, close the frame and mount it into the mechanical slide projector. The projector light turns the slideless slide into an image, revealing and enlarging the texture of what lays between the glass plates.

With this technique of projecting directly, without the intermediate of photography, onto the wall, Munari made elementary school kids discover the hidden beauty of an onion skin, flower petals, seeds of plants, gauze and other daily life "raw material" (fig. 13). In a quite similar way, Munari conducted experiments with the Xerox machine, instructing children how to make not only "copies," but also and especially "originals" – by simply putting all types of paper, folded or wrinkled in all types of shapes, onto the glass plate and pushing the green button.

In his essay *Fantasia* (1977), Munari insists on the importance of explaining the mechanism of the device and all its possible techniques before executing the experiment. Thus, for the direct projection experiment, educators should first demonstrate the multiple operations of the slide projector: projecting, focusing, changing slides, etc. But Munari also encourages teachers to open up the device as far as possible (*"fin dove è possibile"*), to show the children how it looks like inside; or to reveal the potential of the slide projector as spotlight, for instance.³ In other words, children are challenged to think beyond the "proper" use of the device; or, rather, to consider the most dominant use as only one of the possibilities. Rule no. 1, which is valid for all techniques of visual communication, runs as follows: "make [them] familiar with the tool that is used, so that the use is appropriate and that every exploitable possibility is known."⁴

Another fundamental rule is to destroy the work at the end of the experiment:

*The destruction of the collective work [...] is necessary in order to avoid creating models to imitate, and turning the work into a museum piece or the author into a star. It is not the object that should be conserved but the procedure, the design method, the experience that can be modified and repeated according to the problems that arise.*⁵

Munari was much more concerned with the process (the tools, the techniques, the method, etc.) than with the final result. His motto was: "don't say *what* to do, but *how* to do it!"⁶

Whereas Munari himself makes a comparison with verbal communication and the need to know the meaning of words and the basic rules of grammar in order to be able to talk properly (and, subsequently, to make word-plays), I would like to suggest that the Italian self-made educator, very intuitively, teaches children how to become media-archaeological practitioners. Munari's experiments invite children to explore the potentialities of media, to repurpose them or use them "improperly." For Munari, however, the distinction between "proper" and "improper" is irrelevant. What counts is the exploration itself, that is, the *activity* of exploring the media, for which basic knowledge of the tools is fundamental.

In his 1996 essay "Media Archaeology" published in *CTheory*, Siegfried Zielinski defined media archaeology as his "form of activity," referring to Wittgenstein's notion of *Tätigkeit* ("philosophy is not a doctrine it is an activity").⁷ Up to the present, Zielinski insists on the fact that his media-archaeological quest into the "deep time of audiovisuality" is not just a mental or imaginary project; it is instead something that has to be *done*. In other words, media archaeology is something that you *do*. This can range from digging into the archives to digging into the medium itself.

How to hack a bike

The practice of excavating the media themselves can be linked to the practice of hacking. Here I am thinking of hacking not so much as the criminal activity of cracking codes but rather as the form of curiosity (or even creativity) of "exploring the limits of what is possible."⁸ According to the Jargon File, which contains a glossary of computer programmer slang, a hacker is "a person who enjoys exploring the details of programmable systems and how to *stretch their capabilities*, as opposed to most users, who prefer to learn only the minimum necessary."⁹

Numerous Dutch websites give as a non-computer or low-tech example of hacking the use of a clothespin to prevent your pant-legs to get into the chain of your bike; some websites even claim this is the origin of computer hacking.¹⁰ While I was unable to verify the grounds of this historical hypothesis, I did find an image of radio hacking where a clothespin is used for pinching wires.¹¹ The clothespin as bicycle hack has another application, which I consider more interesting and more relevant in media-archaeological terms than its practical use as trouser clipper: with the help of a clothespin you can attach a playing card between the spokes of a bicycle wheel. This is an example of a playful (or useless) hack that turns a silent means of transportation into a noise-making machine; or, better, it repurposes the bicycle into a motorbike.

Here I would like to make a connection with another, maybe more explicit, media-archaeological example of bike exploration that belongs to my personal life and that goes back to the autumn of 2010.¹² After a day of work at university, I picked up my 2,5 year old daughter at the daycare where she had taken a Sesame Street flyer (which was publicity for a theater performance). She put this piece of paper in the windshield of the bike, in front of her (fig. 14). Then she said: "televisie kijken" (*watching telly*). I was struck by her straightforward association between the windshield (= screen of protection) and the television (= screen of display), which is, of course, a question at stake in the archaeology of the screen.

This example tells us that children actually don't need to be instructed on how to become media-archaeological practitioners. Because in their play, they often, very spontaneously, reappropriate *old* media devices or turn ordinary objects (such as stones, playing cards, wallets, showerheads, etc.) into *new* media devices (from game consoles and smartphones to the obsolete wired telephone).¹³ In other words, children playfully engage with media's different temporal and historical layers (past, present, future), by exploring "the limits of what is possible" – to repeat the definition of hacking I quoted above.

How to create noise instruments

The study of hacking practices has been brought into the field of media archaeology by Garnet Hertz and Jussi Parikka, who suggest considering hardware hacking and other hacktivist exercises as contemporary artistic methods to resist the media industry's planned obsolescence. Hertz and Parikka are particularly interested in circuit bending, which is "an electronic DIY movement undertaken by individuals without formal training or approval and focused on manipulating circuits and changing the taken-for-granted function of the technology."¹⁴ Hertz and Parikka believe that a medium never dies; instead, "it decays, rots, reforms, remixes, and gets historicized, reinterpreted and collected."¹⁵ For this reason they introduced the notion of "zombie media," inspired by Wolfgang Ernst's notion of "media undead" and opposed to Bruce Sterling's notion of "dead media." Zombie media are the living dead of both past and present, that is, of media history and today's electronic waste. They are not dead, but simply "out of use" and can be "resurrected to new uses, contexts and adaptations."¹⁶ It is in this vein that they conducted a "zombie media workshop" at the 2011 Transmediale in Berlin, where participants were invited to break open battery-powered toys and to modify their circuits, transforming them into new media devices, i.e. noise-making machines.¹⁷

Circuit bending is indeed commonly associated with noise music, since its techniques often result in generating unusual sound effects and in creating experimental musical instruments – which is also central to the work of Reed Ghazala, the American circuit-bending artist who Hertz and Parikka cite as (historical) reference point. In this context, one could mention a Futurist precursor, Luigi Russolo, who invented in the early 1910s the "art of noises" for which he created a series of noise makers or noise intoners (*intonarumori*). The first specimen of this new type of musical instrument was launched in June 1913: it was the so-called burster (*scoppiatore*), that could produce the sound of an internal combustion engine in a scale of ten whole tones¹⁸ (fig. 15). Unlike circuit-bended instruments, Russolo's noise intoners were fully acoustic: they basically consisted of a wooden box containing some gears, metal plates and metal strings that were made to vibrate. What is at stake in both the electronic and acoustic practices is the output of novel sound, which is also achieved by the very simple bike hack (with playing card and clothespin).

While Hertz and Parikka relate the technique of circuit bending to historical avant-garde practices of reuse, in particular the Cubist technique of collage and the Dadaist ready-made, I would like to stress the importance of *operability* of the newly repurposed devices, even if they are often totally useless or purposeless (like in the case of the bike hack). For these newly repurposed devices are operational; they function like media devices (or musical instruments). This rule also applies, I would like to argue, to the "imaginative" circuit bending of the child's play (for instance, when they are turning the showerhead, or a collectible card, or a piece of paper, into a fully operating two-way communication system). I am not so much concerned here with the difference between art and media, but more with the idea of media archaeology as excavation into the media themselves, into their "hidden" mechanisms and, especially, into their operable potentialities or limits. Although such issues clearly belong to the agenda of new media scholars involved in media archaeology, my point is that the practice of (hardware) hacking is not limited to the realm of electronics or computers.

How to become a cinema hacker

If we consider creative hacking as a form of media archaeology, the work of Italian filmmaker Paolo Gioli offers an interesting example. At the XI MAGIS International Film Studies Spring School, held in Gorizia in March 2013, I proposed to think of Gioli as a media-archaeologist or, even better, as a new media practitioner, because of his exploration of the limits of what used to be cinema's most basic part, namely the camera.¹⁹ As a true cinema hacker, Gioli builds his own pinhole movie cameras out of old photographic devices. Most beautiful is his

stenopeic tablet, which is a rectangular board wrapped with celluloid and placed between two black parts of an obsolete photo-camera box (fig. 16). Because of its flatness and its (black) cover, this self-made device resembles today's electronic tablets, such as the iPad. Yet it is the most archaic movie camera of the digital age. The cover of Gioli's tablet is perforated with little holes, through which light enters to imprint the wrapped filmstrip inside. Gioli's repurposing of a *photographic* device into a *cinematographic* device allows for a connection with the practice of reverse engineering that was common in the early days of cinema. When Georges Méliès's request to buy a *cinématographe* was turned down by the Lumière family at the Salon Indien in December 1895, he travelled to London and bought himself a projector manufactured by Robert W. Paul, which he then took apart and reassembled into a moviemaking camera. The legend goes that the Lumière brothers themselves also reverse-engineered a Paul projector, purchased by their father Antoine with the clear intent to improve Edison's Kinetoscope, seen on show in Paris in 1894. Paul's projector was actually an "improved" version of the Kinetoscope. Since, as Thomas Elsaesser has pointed out, "Edison of all people had neglected to register the patents on [this invention] in Europe, thus allowing [early cinema pioneers like Paul] to buy his machines, take them apart, and [...] reverse-engineer them."²⁰ The story continues when in 1896 William N. Selig built his own version of the *cinématographe* with the help of a metalworker who had repaired a Lumière camera, sparing him to pay patent fees to Edison's company.²¹

When confronted with these early "cinema hackers" circumventing legal issues, Gioli's agenda is quite different. Because Gioli became a "cinema hacker" not only out of desire (or necessity) to build his own instruments, but also and especially out of a deep concern about the industry's strategies of eternal media improvement with its inherent planned obsolescence. He believes that the always increasing market of new electronic devices is not a stimulus, but instead an obstacle; especially for artists, technological innovations can become a blockage for creativity. As he explains in an interview with Claudia D'Alonzo, aptly entitled "Cinemahacking:"

The risk is that electronic engineers are more creative than the artists themselves and another risk is that the artists are sucked into the big multinationals of electronics. All this in my opinion is very dangerous; it's more beautiful to surprise people with nothing.²²

Gioli is driven by an aspiration to explore the potentiality of the medium; or, even better, to explore all the possible directions that the medium has not taken. He pushes the camera to its lowest conditions for making images. By taking away pieces, one by one, such as the lens and the shutter, he is creating the most rudimentary camera. Paradoxically, by making the obsolete (analogue) camera even more archaic than it ever was, he is resisting very effectively against its obsolescence. Here cinema hacking, like circuit bending, is "closely related to the political economy of information technology."²³ Gioli's digging into the cinematic medium becomes a political act, or action, taken against the dominant media policies, such as the strategy mentioned by Hertz and Parikka of "envisioning digital culture in terms of a glossy, high-tech 'Californian Ideology',"²⁴ or – I would like to add – the strategy of the death of cinema which consists in imposing a linear conception of film history in which the digital simply replaces the analogue.

How to hack into history

According to Hertz and Parikka, media archaeology does not always (or not sufficiently enough) connect its counter-factual (or counter-ideological) ideas to political economy and ecology.²⁵ Or, to put it differently, media archaeologists do not always (or not sufficiently enough) think about their approach as *praxis*, as a concrete activ-

ity or action, as a basis for political and/or economic change.²⁶ What does this mean? That we should all become hackers or hacktivists in order to do media archaeology properly? That we should forget about Foucauldian excavations into the past and only be concerned with literally digging into old and new media devices?

With my examples of playful hacking, I have tried to stress the process rather than the final result, the act of doing rather than the outcome. If I would like to propose hacking as a metaphor for doing media archaeology, it is precisely because the term refers to an activity, to an act-in-process. Media archaeology can be conceived of as history hacking, as circuit bending the false image of linear history, which is still so dominant today. But there is more at stake: the metaphor of hacking reminds us that one of media archaeology's original objectives was indeed countering dominant views, whereas today it tends to become a rather dominant (or even fashionable) view itself. Within our own film or media historical revisions/rewritings, we should also be aware of not turning the marginal into the dominant, the forgotten "looser" into a new canonized "winner." Media archaeology as a media-historical enterprise should somehow remain anarchic, as implied by Zielinski's concept of anarchaeology; "unruly," or "undisciplined," as Vivian Sobchack has defined it.²⁷ In this sense, media archaeology approximates to Keith Jenkins's notion of "disobedient history" that rejects the authoritative or hegemonic voice of the historian.²⁸ Yet it should be stressed that media archaeology does not equal media history; media archaeology is – or should be – the practice of creating disturbance (or "noise") into media history.

The question, however, is: how do we create disturbance? How do we turn our activity into a concrete and "noisy" practice? Here I would like to make a connection with Elsaesser's suggestion of media archaeology as a "hermeneutics of astonishment," a rephrasing of Tom Gunning's "aesthetics of astonishment."²⁹ Like the early cinema's spectator, the media historian should be willing to be astonished in order to study the past with "wonder and sheer disbelief."³⁰ S/he needs to have an eye for the otherness, the strangeness, the deviant, in order not only to see the disturbance but also to reappropriate and repurpose it. At the legendary 1978 FIAF conference in Brighton, a new generation of film scholars literally opened their eyes and discovered the otherness of early cinema. This was a concrete action that led to concrete hacking into history. Likewise, other film scholars have started listening to the silence of early cinema, etcetera. We all know the history of new film history.

But is all early cinema scholarship per definition media-archaeological? Or, more generally speaking, is each attempt to rewrite history a form of media archaeology? I would say, very simply, there needs to be a hack. And we need to be conscious about where exactly we are hacking, or repurposing, or creating "noise."

Media archaeology is not just about collecting obsolete media devices, pre-cinematic toys or other films relics. Collecting might become a media-archaeological practice when objects are reorganized, or reactivated, in order to create uncommon, distant relations among them – according to the principle of the *Wunderkammer* or *Wunderschrank* (and, even better, the Futurist logic of analogy).³¹ Media archaeology is also not just about digging into the archives or going to the sites, following the footsteps of previous media-archaeological thinkers. Such a *Tätigkeit*, as Zielinski calls it (after Wittgenstein), becomes a media-archaeological praxis when linear time is bent into deep time, when history is repurposed as a form of geology. Media archaeology is also not just about writing about media archaeology, or about observing and describing the work (or working method) of possible media-archaeological practitioners, although in some cases this might result in a shift of thinking, a shift of perception.³²

Most important to keep in mind is that we need to hack, constantly and consciously, our own hacking. From my own research, I would like to briefly mention here my exercise to reread 19th-century optical toys – like the thaumatrope, the phenakistiscope, the zoetrope and the praxinoscope – as *tactile* media, as part of a larger history of *hands-on* media practices.³³ Countering the notion of "pre-cinematic" so frequently used in handbooks

of film history, I focus on the manual operation of the toys – a strategy that drives my ongoing project on the archaeology of the touch screen. But I also realize that in order to write such an archaeology, I select my material very carefully, that is, I select it in function of the alternative narrative that I want to construct. In other words, I make the same teleological “mistake” as those who constructed the dominant narrative of cinema as purely visual medium.

That media archaeology is indeed not without pitfalls results also from Parikka's *What is Media Archaeology?* and its inevitable act of canonization. As critically observed by John Potts in his review of Parikka's book: “Any canon is by necessity an act of exclusion as well as inclusion, but some of the exclusions [...] are conspicuous. Walter Benjamin is honoured by Parikka as an early 20th-century inspiration – but why not F. T. Marinetti?”³⁴ I couldn't agree more with Potts, who continues: “This poet of the machine and driving force of Futurism combined art and technology almost a century before some of the media artists celebrated by Parikka, and wrote of the sensory and cognitive effects of machines many decades before McLuhan, Kittler or Ernst.”³⁵

To conclude I would like to point out that Marinetti belongs to the history of pioneering hackers. With his words-in-freedom he aimed at literally hacking into the electromagnetic waves of the wireless telegraphy – a practice that he illustrated very visually in one of his free-word compositions, “The Turkish Moored Balloon,” included in the “noisy” war epos, *Zang Tumb Tumb* (1914)³⁶ (fig. 17). The words *PALLONE FRENATO TURCO* are disposed in a circle, which is perforated by “vibbbrrrrrrating” lines. Illustrating the Futurist principle of wireless imagination (*immaginazione senza fili*), the composition displays the interception of fragmented (non-linear) messages sent by wireless telegraphy (*telegrafo senza fili*); the hacked messages consist of words that are literally freed and available in the air (at 400m altitude). In other words, the radio waves, by piercing the balloon, set the poetry free. Maybe this is a fitting image for media archaeology as an “undisciplined discipline,” as a wireless practice, without restraints, that is freely available for all those who want to hack into history?

Illustrations

13. Direct projection of onionskin. Source: Bruno Munari, *Fantasia*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1977, p. 133.

14. RCA Radio Amp Hack. Source: Cigar Box Nation, <http://www.cigarboxnation.com/group/vintage-radios-converted-into-guitar-amps/forum/topics/rca-radio-amp-hack>.

15. Reenactment of Laura's TV bike. Source: personal archive (photomontage).

16. Paolo Gioli demonstrating his (uncovered) stenopeic tablet at the XI MAGIS International Film Studies Spring School, Gorizia, 17 March 2013. Source: personal archive (photo).

17. Futurist free-word hacking composition. Source: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Zang Tumb Tumb*, Edizioni Futuriste di “Poesia,” Milano 1914, p. 120.

Notes

¹ *Mad Men*, Season 1, Episode 13: “The Wheel” (2007).

² In 1926, at age 19, Bruno Munari moved to Milan and joined the group of Milanese Futurists (Marinetti, Buzzi, Prampolini, Fillia, etc.). His first useless machines, which show similarity with the mobile sculptures of Alexander Calder, were put on display in 1933-1934.

The (Noisy) Praxis of Media Archaeology

- ³ Bruno Munari, *Fantasia*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1977, p. 130.
- ⁴ *Idem*, p. 143. My translation. (The original reads: "far conoscere bene lo strumento che si usa in modo che l'uso sia appropriato e che ogni possibilità strumentale sia nota").
- ⁵ *Idem*, p. 144. My translation. (The original reads: "La distruzione dell'opera collettiva [...] va intesa come modo di non creare modelli da imitare, una non museificazione dell'opera, un non divismo dell'autore. Non è l'oggetto che va conservato ma il modo, il metodo progettuale, l'esperienza modificabile pronta a produrre ancora secondo i problemi che si presentano").
- ⁶ Beba Restelli, *Giocare con tatto. Per una educazione plurisensoriale secondo il metodo Bruno Munari*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2002, p. 35. My translation.
- ⁷ Siegfried Zielinski, "Media Archaeology," in *CTheory*, 7 November 1996, www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=42, last visit 13 October 2014.
- ⁸ Richard Stallman, "On Hacking," <https://stallman.org/articles/on-hacking.html>, last visit 13 October 2014.
- ⁹ *The Jargon File*, version 4.4.7, <http://www.catb.org/jargon/html/H/hacker.html>, last visit 13 October 2014. My italics.
- ¹⁰ See for instance the sites related to the "Hacking History" program, organized for Remembrance of the Dead (*Dodenherdenking*), 4 May 2012: <http://www.4en5meiamsterdam.nl/41416/nl/vrijheidsmaaltijd-hacking-history> and <http://framerframed.nl/nl/video/video-onthulling-monument-indienederland/>, last visit 13 October 2014.
- ¹¹ See <http://www.cigarboxnation.com/group/vintage-radios-converted-into-guitar-amps/forum/topics/rca-radio-amp-hack>, last visit 13 October 2014. Blogger Corbie explains: "The clothes pin were pinching the wires that were normally connected to turn the tape player on when you pressed the play button."
- ¹² I have used this anecdote earlier in a talk about children as media archaeologists at the Imagining Media Change symposium, organized by Leibniz Universität Hannover in June 2013: "Pretend (&) Play: Children as Media Archaeologists," unpublished paper.
- ¹³ For some concrete examples, see the online database of the kinderspiel project that I am developing together with Alexandra Schneider: <http://kinderspielproject.com/>.
- ¹⁴ Garnet Hertz, Jussi Parikka, "Zombie Media: Circuit Bending Media Archaeology into an Art Method," in *Leonardo*, vol. 45, no. 5, 2012, p. 426.
- ¹⁵ *Idem*, p. 430.
- ¹⁶ *Idem*, p. 429.
- ¹⁷ For an overview of circuit bending workshops led by Garnet Hertz, see his website <http://www.conceptlab.com/circuitbending/>.
- ¹⁸ On Russolo's noise intoners, see for instance Michael Kirby, *Russolo and the Art of Noise*, in *Id.*, *Futurist Performance*, PAJ Publications, New York 1986, pp. 33-40.
- ¹⁹ Round table on Paolo Gioli, 17 March 2014. See also Wanda Strauven, *Paolo Gioli as (New) Media Archaeologist*, in Alessandro Bordina, Antonio Somaini (eds.), *Paolo Gioli: The Man Without a Movie Camera*, Mimesis, Milano 2014, pp. 17-24. I am retaking here some ideas of this short essay.
- ²⁰ Thomas Elsaesser, "Le Cinéma d'après Lumière": Rereading the "Origins" of the Filmic Image, in Mieke Bal (ed.), *The Practice of Cultural Analysis. Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretation*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1999, p. 66.
- ²¹ See Markus Nornes, *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2007, pp. 97-98.

²² Claudia D'Alonzo, "Cinemahacking: Interview to Paolo Gioli," in *Digimag Journal*, no. 45, 2009, <http://www.digicult.it/digimag/issue-045/cinemahacking-interview-to-paolo-gioli/>, last visit 13 October 2014.

²³ Garnet Hertz, Jussi Parikka, "Zombie Media: Circuit Bending Media Archaeology into an Art Method," cit., p. 425.

²⁴ *Idem*, p. 427.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ Praxis in the Marxist sense implies the will to change the world; it is a political and revolutionary action. In Hannah Arendt's theory of action, praxis refers to the (political) engagement of philosophers in daily life; to the need to focus more on active life (*vita activa*). See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1958.

²⁷ See Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media. Towards an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*, The MIT Press, Cambridge 2006; Vivian Sobchack, *Afterword: Media Archaeology and Re-presencing the Past*, in Erkki Huhtamo, Jussi Parikka (eds.), *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications and Implications*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2011, pp. 323-330.

²⁸ Keith Jenkins, "On Disobedient Histories," in *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2003, pp. 367-385.

²⁹ Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archaeology," in *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 14, nos. 2-3, Spring 2004, p. 113.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ On the "active process of relating" rendered visible in the *Wunderkammer* and *Wunderschrank*, see Barbara Maria Stafford, *Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen*, Getty Publications, Los Angeles 2001, pp. 6-7. See also Id., *Visual Analogy: Consciousness as the Art of Connecting*, The MIT Press, Cambridge 2001.

³² When talking about children as media archaeologists and presenting our kinderspiel project (see note 13), Alexandra Schneider and I have noticed it often creates unease among the audience – which is exactly the point (or the hack).

³³ See Wanda Strauven, *The Observer's Dilemma: To Touch or Not To Touch*, in Erkki Huhtamo, Jussi Parikka (eds.), *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications and Implications*, cit., pp. 146-163.

³⁴ John Potts, Review of *What is Media Archaeology?* by Jussi Parikka and *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications and Implications* edited by Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, in *Screen*, vol. 54, no. 1, 2013, pp. 116-117.

³⁵ *Idem*, p. 117.

³⁶ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Zang Tumb Tumb*, Edizioni Futuriste di "Poesia," Milano 1914, p. 120.

Experimental Media Archaeology in the Media Archaeology Lab: Re-Sensitising the Observer

Introduction¹

In 2013 we were working with a team on theories and philosophies of technology, their function, relevance, impact, and productivity in the field of film and media studies.² One of our starting points was the seemingly cyclical reoccurrence of theories and philosophies of technology.³ Following major technological innovations, there seems to be a periodic general interest in the question of technology. These moments of innovation are of particular interest to film and media scholars, because new theories of technology tend to contribute, in turn, to the transformation of film and media theory and some of its key concepts.⁴ The “birth” of the cinema, as well as the emergence of television as a mass medium and the digital revolution, provide examples of transitions which have profoundly affected our fields of study. In this Udine conference, *At the Borders of (Film) History*, a cascade of examples of philosophies and theories of technologies are discussed, Valéry’s, Benjamin’s, Heidegger’s, Kittler’s, and Stiegler’s theories among them. In my paper, I will exclusively focus on a hardware *hands-on-oriented* approach of film and media history, and on what media historian and sound specialist Andreas Fickers from the University of Luxemburg and I have labelled *experimental* media archaeology.⁵ We have argued that while media archaeology positively helped to constitute the field of media studies, and contributed considerably to the broader awareness of how important media technologies are and have been in the past, in particular in the Humanities, a further step is needed now in terms of studying the materiality of the medium to live up to the expectations raised. For this purpose, Fickers and I wrote a “plea for new directions,” aiming at a return to experimental research on technological devices in laboratory set-ups.⁶ Instead of investing more energy in media archaeology as a primarily, if not almost exclusively, discursive enterprise,⁷ we have opted for an investment in *experimental* media archaeology. In part we are inspired by the idea of historical re-enactment as initiated by the English historian Robin George Collingwood⁸ to acknowledge the role of historians as co-constructors of the epistemic object.⁹ Moreover, we are driven by a desire to produce experimental and

empirical knowledge regarding past media technologies, its usages, developments, and practices. Lastly, our idea of experimental media archaeology has an archival drive; it aspires us to use the immense collections of media apparatuses (*l'appareil de base*) waiting in Film and Media archives for further research. Most of our partners in this project have direct access to collections of apparatuses.¹⁰ Such a collection also forms the heart of the University of Groningen Film Archive, which we are slowly turning into a research lab or "media archaeology lab."¹¹ Part of the reflections presented in this paper stem from on-going discussions with film scholar and emotion specialist Ed Tan from the University of Amsterdam, as we are both interested in what we have labelled "(medium) sensitisation and desensitisation cycles," which we assume underlie medium-awareness cycles and cycles of innovation, habituation and media use.¹² I will get back to this shortly. This paper will primarily address the question *why* we do simulations or re-enactments with old media technologies in an experimental media-archaeology lab and why we believe so strongly in experiments, simulations and hands-on approaches. This paper, however, will not address the question *how* to do such simulations and re-enactments (materially, methodologically) in order to gain different forms of knowledge from different simulations and hands-on experiments.¹³

The film archive as a "media archaeology lab"

Working with the apparatuses in our University of Groningen Film Archive creates a growing awareness of the considerable problems researchers in the fields of film and media history are facing: researchers in these fields constantly deal with technological devices, yet film and media scholars have inevitably lost touch with older practises of media use. Paradoxically, the acute awareness of the historical gap between now and then is only deepened by the Film Archive's material presence: the film reels, the film posters, and in particular the collections of historical apparatuses, editing tables, magic lanterns, cameras and projectors, and all sorts of optical toys.¹⁴ Such "leftovers" of past viewing (and playing) practices may well be seen, touched, used, studied, and experimented with. One reason we plea for a physical engagement with the historical artefacts is: to stimulate our *sensorial appropriation* of the past, thereby critically reflecting the hidden or non-verbalised *tacit* knowledge that informs our engagement with media technologies. In doing what we have named *experimental* media archaeology, we want to plea for a *hands-on* integral sensual approach towards media technologies. "Sapidity slumbers beneath the narcosis of speech," as the French philosopher Michel Serres argued in *The Five Senses*.¹⁵ He argues that a wine's flavour is not well perceptible and that its bouquet does not express itself well to the nose and the tongue ("the second tongue") when they are obstructed by our "first tongue," language. There is information to be gathered *by the senses* when they are not obstructed by "the first tongue," as Serres argues. The humanities and media studies – media archaeology included – rely heavenly on language, on descriptions, on discursive practices, on terms and labels pointing at objects and experiences of these objects, and not so much on the experiential access to optical and sonic technologies. How to best taste wine is a question asked by Michel Serres.¹⁶ How to best study old or obsolete media – including the viewing and hearing experiences they were once able to trigger in audiences – is a question we have been asking ourselves in the context of working with the film and media archive. We claim that inside knowledge regarding media and media use, including the perceptual, aesthetic, and affective experiences created by once new media technologies – knowledge that was lost over time – can in part be regained via simulations and hands-on experiments. While we do not claim that these experiences are identical to the experiences of historical viewers or users of the past when they were introduced to these devices, we do claim, however, that a mental as well as practical "re-enactment" with a set-up similar to the ones used in past media practices – an abundance of sources is available to help construct such simulations – provides all sorts of additional information on the experience as well as on the set-up that

discursive material alone does not provide.¹⁷ This type of experiential knowledge is particularly important for film and media scholars, because they risk a lack of sensitivity to the material properties of the media technologies they are studying. The heuristic value of doing historical re-enactments lies therefore not in the reconstruction of an "authentic" historical experience, but in creating a sensorial and intellectual experiment that will demonstrate the differences between textual and other approaches to the past. In other words, it is not so much the "correctness" of these re-enactments that is the desired objective, but the intellectual and imaginative productivity of experiments with such a set-up. The hands-on approach, we believe, might help solve the "observer's dilemma" of classical media archaeology and hopefully create new forms of collaborations between archives, museums, media artists, and media scholars.¹⁸ Moreover, it may help to close the epistemological gap in the research of media that has been left by the explanatory models that take the transparency of media for granted.¹⁹ Normally, users only have a strong focus on the properties of the medium when it is new. Perceptual and aesthetic effects triggered by new technologies (so-called novelty effects) tend to be notable and memorable. Because of their prominence these effects are often talked about in the first phase after the introduction of the technology, as reception documents have shown.²⁰ Due to the repetitive use of a technological device, however, these effects gradually wane up to a point where the user's conscious awareness of the material properties of the medium disappears altogether. Thus, repetitive use renders the medium "transparent;" the device becomes "second nature." This very process inevitably creates a loss of knowledge of the sensual and experiential properties of media technologies. This is particularly problematic for the field as it also profoundly affects media scholars' retrospective accounts of media developments. I will first focus on media transparency as a problem (even a threat) to media studies and on experimental media archaeology as a possible or partial solution to it – in as far as hands-on methods may help to tease out transparency effects of media as a result of a complex historical process, in which psychological and technological as well as sociological and discursive factors play a role. I will successively present three problems:

1. Language, as understood by Merleau-Ponty, is a transparent medium and is often treated as a somewhat dubious emblematic medium in the broader field of media studies; language underlies most definitions of "medium," yet these definitions are too broad, and overlook the (material) specificity and value of media (Lambert Wiesing).
2. Media (language included) are not transparent by, and of, themselves, and the so-called "technical media," as Kittler labelled them, are even less so. They trigger all sorts of perceptual effects in users, and their materiality and sensual features (the effects of which can be teased out in experiments) need attention and cannot be taken for granted.
3. There are *two* ends to the media-experience continuum. On one end we see the notable novelty experience and medium awareness. On the other end we see absorption and a lack of medium awareness; in this experience the viewer or user overlooks the medium, it becomes "transparent" and s/he becomes absorbed in what is represented (figure or story world), making it "real" or "present."²¹ The two ends of the experience spectrum indicate that we cannot experience novelty and absorption at the same time.

What are media?

In *What are Media?*²² phenomenologist Lambert Wiesing argued that "for all the differences between phenomenological media theories, one observation is always the focus of interest – the transparency of media or the self-denial of the medium."²³ Accordingly, the medium "is a means that functions only when it steps back. To fulfil their function, media must remain un-thematised. Put differently, media display something without displaying themselves."²⁴ From the phenomenological point of view, media "do all the more justice to their task

the more they neutralise themselves in their employment as media."²⁵ To explain the importance of medial transparency, phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty refers to language as the example *par excellence*. The *raison d'être* of language as a means of communication, as he explains in his well-known description of media transparency, is

[...] to efface itself to the extent that its expression comes across. [...] When someone – an author or a friend – succeeds in expressing himself [herself], the signs are immediately forgotten; all that remains is the meaning. The perfection of languages lies in its capacity to pass unnoticed. [...] In the way it works, language hides itself from us. Its triumph is to efface itself.²⁶

In other words, the medium has become subservient to the expression of meaning and invisible in terms of its own material presence. The consequence of this phenomenological approach in media studies is clear, as Wiesing concludes: "All means that remain un-thematised during their employment are addressed as media. Accordingly, signs are media the same way every tool is. The definition in fact has lost all meaning."²⁷

Providing a workable definition of its object is nevertheless crucial to any field of studies and perhaps even more so for the field of media studies as media scholars aim at understanding cultural practices which constantly and rapidly change. Furthermore, the media products and their impact on the viewer or user tend to be ephemeral, first sensed and then forgotten: they are part of an on-going process of use that automatically and inevitably conceals the traces media technologies initially provoke in users in terms of their experience of media, their sense responses to them, their medium awareness.²⁸

Equally famous as Merleau-Ponty's words on media transparency is Friedrich Kittler's statement (as a media archaeologist) on the difference between *technische Medien* or "technical media" such as photo-, phono-, and cinematographic media, and other communication media, such as language. As Kittler states, language operates by way of a "symbolic grid" which requires that all data "pass through the bottleneck of the signifier,"²⁹ whereas *technische Medien* – the analogue technological media – process physical effects of the real.³⁰ Geoffrey Winthrop-Young has pointed out that Kittler frequently supported this statement with Rudolph Arnheim's renowned quote, which states that with the arrival of new (analogue) media "reproductions are not supposed to resemble the object, but rather guarantee this resemblance by being, as it were, a product of the object in question, that is, by being mechanically produced by it."³¹

In other words, Kittler cited Arnheim, a perception and Gestalt psychologist who studied film and visual media in particular, to point at a crucial quality of the technologies that mediate photographic images, moving images, and sound: mechanically speaking, they produce an object with a resemblance to the object represented within the limits of the technology used. By implication, the technical media need to be understood in relation to perceptual impact and aesthetic styles in a new and different way. This is, first of all, because the data need not pass through the bottleneck of the signifier. And secondly, because the data contain the inevitable inscription of the technical medium itself. In Winthrop-Young's paraphrase of Kittler: "Arts give way to media; aesthetical styles are replaced by technical standards."³² These pivotal insights regarding the differences between technical and other media have not been made sufficiently productive in the fields of film and media studies thus far. Nevertheless, it is clear that the perceptual and other effects of media technologies on audiences need attention and cannot just be taken for granted.³³

The two ends of the experience continuum

One end of the experience continuum shows novelty experiences, yet the other end transparency effects, when users are made to ignore the ontological difference between medium and real, representation and represented. In early psychology, it was argued that such habituation (or automatisisation) effects are quite useful: in order to

safe mental energy that can then be spend on deciphering the content rather than on the perceptual processes. The habituation hypothesis is more than a century old.

If we start to examine the general laws of perception, we see that as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic. Thus, for example, all of our habits retreat into the area of the unconsciously automatic [...]. In this process, ideally realized in algebra, things are replaced by symbols. [...] The process of "algebraization," the over-automatization of [the perception of] an object, permits the greatest economy of perceptive effort. Either objects are assigned only one proper feature – a number, for example – or else they function as though by formula and do not even appear in cognition.³⁴

As the quote indicates, there is a close link between the process of symbolisation and the "over-automatisation" of perception as is realised in a process of repetitive (or habitual) perception of an act or object. In such a process, we replace the material objects by *symbols* (algebraic or linguistic ones) and these symbols come to represent the object (which includes the experience of the object). The hypothesis helps to explain how language as a symbolic system is so well suited for communication when it has become a transparent medium in the way Merleau-Ponty described.

Early theories of habituation were not only studied in the then young discipline of psychology, they were also carefully reflected upon by some contemporary avant-garde artists who were seeking experiences at the other end of the experience continuum. I am of course specifically thinking of Viktor Shklovsky from whom I quoted the statement on automatisisation (from "Art as technique") above. Shklovsky was aiming at *de-automatisation* with the help of *new techniques* as used *in the arts*. The habituation hypothesis ("the general laws of perception") helped him to explain why and how such new techniques transform experience. He came to understand that habituation creates a loss of perceptual experience. Additionally, he learned that *de-automatisation* with help of the use of new techniques can make what is familiar *strange* (*ostrannenie*) again, which tends to trigger what Shklovsky labelled a typical art experience:

The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important...

After we see an object several times, we begin to recognize it. The object is in front of us and we know about it, but we do not see it – hence we cannot say anything, significant about it. Art removes objects from the automatism of perception in several ways.³⁵

These words inspired me when I was working on "Russian Formalism" to *re-enact* (mentally, at first, later using hands-on experiments with devices involved) these passages in an attempt to understand why Shklovsky had been so interested in the art experience, yet so little in the art object; and what had brought him to early psychology and to the idea of *de-automatisation*? What had it meant for an avant-garde artist and theorist such as the young Viktor Shklovsky in 1912, 1913, to have been part of the new event of the film show, to have been *in touch with* such events, to have felt their performative powers, the sheer fun of it, the *craze* of it (Tsivian).³⁶ Moreover, to have been part of the Futurist movement with Vladimir Mayakovsky and his friends, who created a new and performative poetic practice, which was quite similar to the ones created by projectionists in their film shows. What seems to have fuelled the early avant-garde's imagination was the acute, disruptive experience of the world transformed by technology, or to use Shklovsky's words: a world "made strange," thus made visible. Shklovsky and his friends provided the conceptual space for framing and explaining the impact of such new disruptive techniques in the form of a theory the Futurists themselves were unable to formulate. Making

the world visible once again by making the world strange (alien, de-familiar), using techniques in art, which disturb and delay our perceptual process: this was the central statement Shklovsky presented in 1913 and 1914. His friends would repeat this in the 1920s (e.g., in *Poetika Kino*, *Lef*). Now they were ready to write their essays on the cinema's techniques of "deformation," its "photogenicity," and so on. One may argue that the 1913 idea of "making visible" by "making strange" actually described what most contemporaries at that point in time already were experiencing. Shklovsky simply helped shape and frame the experience.

His explanation of novelty effects and the twin mechanisms of "automatisation" and "de-automatisation" are highly interesting for the field of film and media studies as they help conceptualise *medium awareness* experiences. The twin mechanisms invite the conceptualisation of processes of *sensitisation* (by de-automatisation); *desensitisation* (by automatisation); and *re-sensitisation* to media technologies.³⁷ Moreover, the notion of "technique" creates a conceptual space to analyse the effects of both hardware and software, of technology and (artistic) techniques.³⁸ This is exactly what makes the term productive and suitable for studies in the field of the arts and media, in which technology profoundly interferes with the creation and development of the arts. Shklovsky provided the conceptual tools to describe and analyse the process of appropriation of new techniques in culture, and he brought to light that the genealogies of art and technique are intertwined because they are inherently connected.

Conclusion

Experimental media archaeology addresses the ensuing knowledge gap left by media theories taking the transparency of media for granted. It does so by proposing a re-sensitisation to media technologies as part of the research practice. It claims that *aesthetics* and *anaesthetics* (the narcosis of the senses) are terms that should be taken seriously in the world of cinema and media studies, for at least three reasons. One, a pivotal feature of media usage is that new (mimetic) devices, by creating strange distortions, deformations, enlargements etc., *de-automatises* users and sensitises them to the material and perceptual properties of a new medium.³⁹ Two, these initial effects disappear in the process of use up to a point where awareness of the materiality of the medium is almost fully lost. Three, the process of habituation triggers de-sensitisation and transparency effects in users, which are often taken for granted in cinema and media studies. This affects media studies in profound ways, including the ways in which the object of study is defined. This paper argued that a *re-sensitisation* of expert observers – using hands-on experiments and media simulations – should create medium awareness, which helps construct the epistemic object, define what a "medium" is, and ultimately helps create consensus in the field with regard to the study of the medium.

Notes

¹ This paper benefits from collaborations with colleagues in the fields of archiving and film and media studies as already partially presented in *Techné / Technology* (AUP, 2014). I am most grateful to Andreas Fickers, Giovanna Fossati, Ed Tan, Ian Christie, Dominique Chateau, John Elis, and Geoffrey Winthrop-Young.

² Ian Christie, Dominique Chateau, Benoît Turquety, Andreas Fickers, Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, Martin Lefebvre, Francesco Pitassio, Giovanna Fossati, and others were working on a new volume for *The Key Debates* on the subject of technology. See Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Techné / Technology*.

Researching Cinema and Media Technologies, their Development, Use and Impact. The Key Debates, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2014, vol. 4.

³ On the cyclical reoccurrence of philosophies of technology and their impact on the field of Film Studies see in particular the Introduction to *Techné / Technology*: Annie van den Oever, *Researching Cinema and Media Technologies*, cit., pp. 15-26.

⁴ See Dominique Chateau, *The Philosophy of Technology in the Frame of Film Theory: Walter Benjamin's Contribution*, in Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Techné / Technology*, cit., pp. 29-49.

⁵ Andreas Fickers, Annie van den Oever, *Experimental Media Archaeology. A Plea for New Directions*, in Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Techné / Technology*, cit., pp. 272-278.

⁶ *Idem*, p. 272.

⁷ As to the field of media archaeology within the field of film studies more specifically: some recent publications provide introductions, overviews and analyses of the impact of media archaeology and Kittler's work on the fields of film studies, curating and archival practices, media art, etc. See for example, Erkki Huhtamo, Jussi Parikka (eds.), *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2012, and Wanda Strauven, *Media Archaeology: Where Film History, Media Art, and New Media (Can) Meet*, in Julia Noordegraaf, Cosetta Saba, Barbara Le Maître, Vinzenz Hediger (eds.), *Preserving and Exhibiting Media Art: Challenges and Perspectives*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2013, pp. 59-80.

⁸ Andreas Fickers, Annie van den Oever, *Experimental Media Archaeology. A Plea for New Directions*, cit., p. 273.

⁹ For further information on Collingwood and the idea of *mental* re-enactment and its value for reconstructing history, see *Idem*, pp. 273-274.

¹⁰ On such hands-on experiments we have been in a constant dialogue with several colleagues, among them, Giovanna Fossati, Head Curator of EYE Film Institute Netherlands in Amsterdam; Ian Christie, Film and Media Historian at Birkbeck College London and closely working with the British Film Institute BFI where Christie spent part of his career. Television scholar John Ellis, Professor of Media Arts at Royal Holloway University of London and currently working on simulations with apparatuses in close collaboration with the BBC to help write the history of television in the UK, and Dominique Chateau, Professor of Aesthetics and Cinema at Paris 1, who reassessed the philosophies of technology by Valéry and Benjamin only recently (see Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Techné / Technology*, cit., pp. 29-49). Lastly, Geoffrey Winthrop-Young deepened my understanding of Kittler's value for the broader field of the Humanities quite considerably (see Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Techné / Technology*, cit., pp. 219-239). Recently, Winthrop-Young edited the special issue on cultural techniques for *Theory, Culture & Society* (with Ilinca Iurascu and Jussi Parikka), and translated an essay collection by Bernhard Siegert. See also: Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, "Hunting a Whale of a State: Kittler and His Terrorists," in *Cultural Politics* 8, no. 3, 2012, pp. 399-412.

¹¹ Only recently a symposium was addressed to the topic of turning Film Archives into research Laboratories; see <http://filmarchief.ub.rug.nl/root/Nieuws/?pLanguage=en>; for an overview of the sub-collections of the archive, see <http://filmarchief.ub.rug.nl/root/?pLanguage=en>, last visit 20 October 2014.

¹² See also a psychological analysis written by Ed Tan and his team on the experience of absorption in the cinema; *presence*, *immersion*, (*media*) *unawareness* are all labels for the same experience in philosophical and, more specifically, phenomenological discussions. Ed Tan, Frank Hakemulder, Katalin Balint, Miruna Doicaru, Monique Kuijpers, *Into Film. A Simulation Account of Absorption in Viewing Narrative Film* (October 2013). This chapter will be published in the monograph on Absorption to

be published at the end of the Netherlands National Research Foundation's Absorption project in 2015.

¹³ For such methodological reflections on the topic, see Andreas Fickers, *Hands-on! Plädoyer für eine experimentelle Medienarchäologie* [Under review].

¹⁴ On this dilemma, see also Wanda Strauven, *The Observer's Dilemma: To Touch or Not to Touch*, in Erkki Huhtamo, Jussi Parikka (eds.), *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2011, pp. 148-163. See also our reflection on this dilemma in Annie van den Oever, *Techné / Technology*, cit., p. 275.

¹⁵ Michel Serres, *The Five Senses. A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies* (*Les Cinq sens*, Grasset, Paris 1985), Continuum, London 2008, p. 153.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ Similar experiments are done by media artists such as Zoe Beloff (CUNY) and many others and Leonardo and M.I.T. have long since been keeping track of artist's experiments which are very helpful for a better understanding of media developments and effects by media scholars. Moreover, similar hands-on experiments are done in the field of history of the sciences and they are known to create new insights into past experiments, such as by the Huygens brother's or Galilei as well as in the documents produced on such past experiments. See also television scholar John Ellis who organises simulations for purposes of reconstructing the decades of (mainstream) television in the UK in close collaboration with former BBC television producers. For an excursion into the set-up and methods, see also Andreas Fickers, *Hands-on!*, cit.

¹⁸ See Wanda Strauven, *The Observer's Dilemma: To Touch or Not to Touch*, cit., pp. 148-163.

¹⁹ See critical notes on this by Lambert Wiesing, *What are Media?*, in Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Techné / Technology*, cit., pp. 93-102.

²⁰ See Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Ostrannenie: On "Strangeness" and the Moving Image. The History, Reception, and Relevance of a Concept*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2010.

²¹ For an overview of phenomenological terms related to the experiences of "realness" and "presence," and a psychological analysis of the mechanisms at work in the experience, see Ed Tan *et al.* on absorption: Id., *Into Film*, cit.

²² Lambert Wiesing, *What are Media?*, in Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Techné / Technology*, cit., pp. 93-102.

²³ *Idem*, p. 94.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ Merleau-Ponty quoted in Lambert Wiesing, *What are Media?*, in Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Techné / Technology*, cit., p. 94.

²⁷ *Idem*.

²⁸ For a series of interesting reflections on the ephemeral effects of (new) media and experiments with them by media artists, see also Julia Noordegraaf *et al.* (eds.), *Preserving and Exhibiting Media Art*, cit.

²⁹ Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1999, p. 4.

³⁰ Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, *Kittler and the Media*, Polity, Cambridge 2011, p. 59. See my dialogue on Kittler with Geoffrey Winthrop-Young: Annie van den Oever, Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, *Rethinking the Materiality of Technical Media: Friedrich Kittler, Infant Terrible with a Rejuvenating Effect on Parental Discipline. A Dialogue*, in Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Techné / Technology*, cit. pp. 219-239.

³¹ Rudolph Arnheim quoted in Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, cit., pp. 11-12.

³² Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, *Kittler and the Media*, cit., p. 60.

³³ Note also that a new discipline within the broader field of aesthetics is now quickly becoming prominent: techno aesthetics, dealing with technology and sensation, sense perception and sensibility; it reflects upon such topics as the inscription of media technologies, their "sensible" properties, plus traces of it in reception and media use; and new modes of perception and representation triggered by new technologies. See Dominique Chateau on Valéry, Benjamin, Couchot, and others, in *The Philosophy of Technology in the Frame of Film Theory: Walter Benjamin's Contribution*, in Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Techné / Technology*, cit., pp. 29-49.

³⁴ Viktor Shklovsky, *Art as Technique*, in Lee T. Lemon, Marion J. Reis (eds.), *Russian Formalist Criticism. Four Essays* [1917], University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln-London 1965, pp. 12-13.

³⁵ *Idem*, p. 16.

³⁶ Yuri Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception*, translated by A. Bodger, edited by R. Taylor, Routledge, London-New York 1994.

³⁷ Some years ago, Laura Mulvey spoke with great appreciation about this idea (of what I have labelled re-sensitisation here) when referring to Tom Gunning's essay in *Rethinking Media Change*, where he makes, in Mulvey's words, "the very thought-provoking suggestion that the move from one mode of perception to the other may be reversed. He begins by tracing the simple shift from (in his terms) wonder and astonishment to their subordination to habit and the incorporation of the strange into second nature. He then argues that Shklovsky's concept of defamiliarisation through art could enable habituated perception to once again recover its strangeness." In Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Ostrannenie*, cit., p. 197. See also Tom Gunning, *Re-Newing Old Technologies: Astonishment, Second Nature, and the Uncanny in Technology from the Previous Turn-of-the-Century*, in David Thorburn, Henry Jenkins (eds.), *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 2003, pp. 39-60.

³⁸ On the etymology of the terms *techniques* and *technology* now being mostly used as synonyms, see Benoît Turquety, *Toward an Archaeology of the Cinema/Technology Relation: From Mechanization to "Digital Cinema"*, in Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Techné / Technology*, cit., pp. 50-64.

³⁹ For a further analysis see Annie van den Oever, "The Medium-Sensitive Experience and the Paradigmatic Experience of the Grotesque, 'Unnatural' or 'Monstrous'," in *Leonardo* 46, no. 1, February 2013, pp. 88-89.

New Paradigms in Media Studies: The Question of the Screen¹

I suggested at a conference in Montreal to consider that film and media theory, including their competition, requires an epistemological reflection.² This is a double update of this theory: in addition to the resonance that technological progress has on this theory, it also means questioning its tools to select those on which the discourse of this resonance can rely. In this context, I suggested we returned to the paradigm-theory of Thomas Kuhn.³ I think, firstly, that there are ideological paradigms, which form the first level of understanding of technological data, so that theory must strive to mould them to transform them into epistemological paradigms and, secondly, that some of the epistemological paradigms that were established first, during a "scientific revolution" for Kuhn, are reduced to an ideological status if they are not remoulded in response to changes in real data. In my paper today, I will consider two ideological paradigms that more or less pertinently serve as epistemological paradigms: the despecification of *dispositifs*, in the sense of a loss of specificity, and the dematerialization of image. I will switch from one to the other through an epistemological reflection inspired by a diligent reading of Walter Benjamin, leading to the question of the screen.

One caricatures the "question of the *dispositif*" by reducing it to a "quarrel of *dispositifs*," to the choice between some kind of essentialism of the *dispositif* intended to support the position of the advocates of old school cinema and a post-modern position highlighting the dissemination of the means through which one relates to the media, where film is reduced to a sort of nebula of media practices. At the forefront of this quarrel, Raymond Bellour concedes that "cinema is really only one among many *dispositifs*,"⁴ but defends the uniqueness of the experience lived within the film *dispositif* – "The living projection of a film in a cinema, in the dark, for the prescribed time of a more or less collective session, becomes and remains the condition for a unique experience of perception and memory, defining its spectator, and that any other situation of vision more or less alters. And only this experience is worth being called 'cinema'."⁵

I give the word *dispositif* a theoretical meaning through which we can reflect on both the cinematographic *dispositif* and the hybrid *dispositifs* that compete with it. In addition, I will keep the French term *dispositif* to avoid

the technological limitation conveyed by its translation into *apparatus*. Through his reflection on the institutional status of art, George Dickie noted that "one central feature that all of the systems [of the art world] have in common is that each is a framework for *presenting* particular works of art."⁶ In the same vein but regarding painting, Louis Marin advocated the concept of *dispositif* as a presentation of the representation:⁷

as a signifying structure, any representation, whether language or image, presents itself representing something. [...] Hence the attention to the dispositifs of presentation as the conditions for the possibility and efficacy of representation in painting, such as the frame, the decor, the layout of the representation, etc., in order to measure, in all cases, and as precisely and rigorously as possible, the "effects of meaning" in terms of process of representation, in terms of the gaze and the eye, which appropriate its forms and colours, but also in terms of "effects of presence" and their ideological, political, religious and devotional implications, etc.

We must note that the frame is a double concept that refers, according to Dickie, to the abstract conditioning of representation and, according to Marin, to the specific shape of the pictorial frame – or, if you prefer, to the cinematographic frame (in this case, the screen) –, where representation is physically located.

It should be noted that Marin addresses here not only painting in the conditioning of the canvas, but also the architectural conditioning of frescoes and ornamentation. Thus, regarding Filippo Lippi's frescoes on *The Story of John the Baptist* (1452-1465) in the Prato Cathedral, Marin highlights how the presentation of a representation operates within a mural *dispositif* taking into account the angle between two walls:⁸

here the story of this decapitation is told through a strange cut. [...] The executioner holds the head at arm's length [...] towards Salome, who turns away from such horror, yet, at the same time, offering her plate to receive it. [...] The angle of the wall precisely meets the angle of the bent arm, which holds the head, from one wall to the other; [...] the articulation of the medium – the vertical angle of the perpendicular wall – corresponds with a cut in the painted body. A double caesura: the cutting of the medium and its placement by this angle of the walls, which is also the cutting of the historied body within its image [...].

Framing is once again the issue at stake here. Considering the pilaster in the *Annunciation* paintings, Marin also studied the interaction of the internal and the external, as the pilaster can be part of the painting or an architectural element that delimits or structures what it represents:⁹

In the work of Lippi, the central pilaster in the foreground – which conceals, while matching it architecturally, that of the portico leading to the loggia of the Virgin –, this pilaster is now behind the angel. The messenger of God has crossed the frontier it marked out to penetrate into the interspace. The two Angels standing in the left half are somehow the traces of his displacement.

When one talks about *dispositif*, the aim is therefore to know whether it is a conditioning that is purely external to the representation, if it belongs to it or even, in the cases studied by Marin, if it has both functions. The basic apparatus which, according to Jean-Louis Baudry's theory, produces "the cinematographic effect,"¹⁰ also involves interaction between the internal shape of the perspectivist vision system and the projection *dispositif* in the cinema.

The viewer is positioned in the theatre in order to fit the point of view imposed by the vision system. I leave aside the question whether this set up produces an inevitable ideological effect. What interests me is the interaction of the different elements of this set up, especially as defined by Frank Kessler:¹¹

the theory of the dispositif offers [...] a description of how the institution of cinema operates – with all the ideological effects that this also implies – in terms of a relationship between a number of factors:

- firstly, hardware technology producing conditions favourable to:*
- secondly, a specific positioning of the viewer based on unconscious desires, which corresponds to:*
- thirdly, an institutionalized form of film (roughly, “classical cinema”) whose method of address aims at ensuring optimal maintenance of the spectatorial positioning, often qualified as “voyeuristic.”*

The triangle formed by *material technology-spectatorial positioning-institutionalized form of film* is a kind of matrix that can allow us, notably through differentiation, to reflect on any other kind of *dispositif*.

It should also be noted that the field of film studies is not the only field in which the *dispositif* is highlighted. Jean-Marie Schaeffer also highlighted it in photography: “any image recognized as a photograph, is part, from the outset, of the pragmatic knowledge implied by the use of the *dispositif*, a knowledge whose fundamental element is the recognition of the causal link that connects the impregnation to the image.”¹² And Jean Davallon also highlighted the *dispositif* regarding exhibitions: “In its greatest generality, we can [...] define the exhibition as a *dispositif* resulting from an arrangement of things in space with the (constitutive) intention to make them accessible to social beings.”¹³ Jean Davallon also offered an interesting comparison between the *dispositif* of the museum and the *dispositif* of the exhibition.¹⁴ His multiparametric analysis – the relationship between *dispositif* and reception, form of the relationship, characteristic of the reception, method of knowledge production, consequence for the visitor, type of *dispositif* – realizes the approximation towards the object which, in making we perceive analytically what we only perceived synthetically (as in Plato’s dialectical opposition of the one and the multiple, or in experiencing an Impressionist painting) allows us to differentiate what otherwise seemed identical.

Regarding audiovisual media, this analytical perspective can help us achieve a dialectical approach to specificity. When focusing on a specific *dispositif*, we can see the aspects of its specificity, we feel their resistance. When we broaden the perspective on the range of *dispositifs*, we then see a hybridation that leads to despecification. The latter term is used by some psychoanalysts to explain our psychotic relationship to the world; they notably insist on how despecification affects otherness, while it is by taking stock of differences, including of the blockages between the individual and the world, that we participate in sociality. The opposition between the specific medium and generalized hybridization presents us with something similar: instead of participating in an activity centred on a single, predefined and standardized *dispositif*, we enter into a multi-polar flow where nomadic receivers can give free rein to their desire of the moment. The internet would then both be the epitome and the symbol of this despecification.

However, it existed before in the field of art. Without returning to the ready-mades and playful innovations of Marcel Duchamp, we can evoke the ambivalence of Pollock’s paintings that can be considered both as paintings in their upright position and as places of *action painting* in their position on the ground – we know, in this regard, the opposition between Clement Greenberg’s point of view, for whom the painter embodied the essence of the specificity of the pictorial medium, and that of Harold Rosenberg, who, focusing on the process of dripping, therefore saw it as an expenditure of energy, foreshadowing the abandoning of painting in favour of performance.¹⁵ We can also mention the idea of assemblage, highlighted notably by the exhibition *The Art of Assemblage* at MoMA in 1961, about which William C. Seitz explained that the works brought together in this exhibition, “collages, objects, buildings, [...] are mostly assembled rather than painted, drawn, modelled, or carved,” since their “constituent elements are preformed natural or manufactured materials, objects, or fragments not intended as art materials.”¹⁶

The aesthetics of assemblage or installation resulted in exhibition *dispositifs* where... *dispositifs* are exhibited,

as in *Rooms, Conversations*, an exhibition organised in 2008 at Le Plateau (France) from the collections of FRAC Île-de-France, where, as noted by André Rouillé:¹⁷

in a fully post-modern approach of mise en abyme, one does not enter into the traditional exhibition-dispositif to see and contemplate artworks-things, but to discover, experiment and activate other dispositifs: artworks-dispositifs. [...] While artworks-things primarily appealed to the eyes of viewers, artworks-dispositifs appeal to all their sensory abilities, their dispositions to act and react, as well as their ability to conceptualize.

The idea of ambivalence or ambiguity of the *dispositif* is fundamental here. In the *Rooms, Conversation* exhibition, one could see *La Vidéothèque mobile* by Fabrice Gygi which “took the form of a removable and transportable structure, similar to those used in popular gatherings, consisting of benches, bleachers, tables, shelves and a kiosk: an artwork-dispositif where one could borrow videos and watch them at will.” However, during the last FIAC in Paris in 2013, a large installation called *Cinéphémère* was exhibited in the Jardin des Tuileries, which served as a cinema with 14 seats and in which a series of short films were projected daily. Why was the *dispositif* of *La Vidéothèque mobile* considered a work of art, while the *Cinéphémère* was considered a place only to show films? This is probably a naive question, which is why it addresses a crucial issue well described, in my opinion, by George Dickie in his famous institutional theory of art; the presentation context is crucial as it transforms the artwork into a social offer. Two seemingly identical facts may exemplify divergent values by performing various social goals in their respective presentation contexts. From this point of view, despecification is an effect of the institutional context. The free flow of information, like the generalized hybridization of *dispositifs*, is an effect of post-modern society, of what society forcibly imposes on individuals, far from the freedom of decision that it seems to offer them. We have more or less the choice to agree with it or not, but we do not have, to quote Kierkegaard, *the choice to choose*.

Here, to progress in my approach, I prefer to appeal to Walter Benjamin, the first theorist to have considered despecification in his *Essay on Reproduction*.¹⁸ Some see his approach as pessimistic: a complaint on the irreversible loss of the aura, others as optimistic: the opening and adherence to a new cultural type of entertainment. In fact, Benjamin invites us neither to pure nostalgia for the past, nor to pure beatitude regarding the present, but to both, seen as two opposites that coexist in continued tension, a paradoxical state he called the *dialectical image* and of which he gave multiple illustrations.¹⁹ In Benjamin’s work, the dialectical image is not just a theme; it is also a method. It is explicitly present when addressing a particular register, notably the modern (by opposition to the archaic), but it is always present in an underlying and significant manner, as a *way of thinking the world*. To illustrate the usefulness of thinking through the dialectical image, one can consider the manner in which Benjamin built his reflections, between pessimism and optimism. He opposed “contemplation which, in the decline of middle-class society, became a school for asocial behaviour,” to “distraction as the initiation to new forms of social behaviour.”²⁰ The optimist exults, but he should not let himself be carried away as a dubious intermediary suddenly interposed itself: Dadaism, which both prolonged and betrayed the legacy of the art form it proceeded from by repressing enchanting artworks in favour of artworks as “projectiles.” “The work of art hence acquires a traumatic quality” and “boosts the demand for films, whose distracting character is first and foremost traumatic, as it is based on changes of places and plans that erratically assail the spectator.” The dialectical image operates in the fact that “the distracting element is also first and foremost traumatic,” if, initially, the antinomy is between contemplation and distraction (in the sense of entertainment), it becomes the opposition or, rather, the antinomic tension between distraction and trauma. Aiming at entertaining, amusing and delighting, art uses the strength of images which, constantly changing, block the associations that the mind could make with each of them and abuses it.²¹

If one compares the screen on which the film is projected to the canvas, the image on the screen transforms itself, but not the image on the canvas. The latter invites the viewer to contemplation. In front of it, we abandon ourselves to associations but we cannot do this in front of a film. Our eye has hardly had the time to grasp it before it has already been transformed. It cannot be fixed. Duhamel, who detests film, but not without mentioning some elements of its structure, comments on this situation as follows: "I can no longer think what I want. The moving images replace my own thoughts." In fact, the process of association of those who contemplate these images is immediately interrupted by their transformation. It is what constitutes the traumatic shock of film which, like any trauma, needs to be softened by sustained attention. Through its very mechanism, film has given back its physical character to the moral trauma caused by Dadaism.

Two ideas in this important text must be underlined: association and "physicality." First, association reminds us of the discussions of 18th century British philosophers, notably the debate between Edmund Burke²² and Archibald Alison;²³ for Burke aesthetic pleasure derives from the associations triggered by works of art – for example the association that a painting creates with memories of poetry – while for Alison, it is better to consider the artwork's simplest perceptible (*physical*) qualities, excluding any associative mediation. Benjamin, meanwhile, clearly sided with Burke: the contemplative aesthetics of associations, since Dadaist provocation, transformed into *aesthetics*, to quote Valéry,²⁴ that film reinforces by translating it physically, "through its very mechanism," in its method of composition, the form used by film being that of successive images that replace one another, and each time, brutalize the mind. The reference to Valéry is particularly relevant if we remember the seminal text in which he opposed to the permanent value of the Beautiful, stationary and now obsolete, the "values of shock."²⁵ The "traumatic shock" has this characteristic that it captures the mind of the receiver, preventing him from thinking for himself: film thinks for him.

In short, the positive aspect of the broader availability of distraction also corresponds to the negative aspect of the trauma. It is still precisely this simultaneity that can be observed when Benjamin developed the theme of *art for the masses*: cultural broadening, certainly, but also an instrument of proletarian alienation and fascist propaganda – the enthusiasm for cultural broadening peters out when one thinks of the tragedies to come! However, I leave that aside to draw some conclusions about the functioning of the dialectical image in the context of what I call the "question of the screen" or the "fascination for the screen." Indeed, I think that this is a crucial issue in relation to the discussion on despecification, as the dialectical image seems perfectly adapted to think despecification. The ideological paradigm that must be considered in this regard is that of dematerialization. To quickly summarize what it is, we can again observe that this theme, which has become a central element in the debate on digital art and media digitization, has its beginnings in contemporary art, notably in an article by Lucy Lippard and John Chandler published in 1968 in *Art International* and entitled "The Dematerialization of Art,"²⁶ which states that art is now reduced to the concept of art or to pure action. The institution of contemporary art has continued to exploit this vein, for example with the exhibition *Les Immatériaux* at the Pompidou Centre in 1984,²⁷ curated by Jean-François Lyotard and presented as a focus not only on the immaterial itself, but also on the recession of the material in its own identity, that is to say a material whose own materiality would be supplanted by the model of language and, thus, would be conceived in a relational and interactive, rather than substantial manner. Obviously, the idea of dematerialization has experienced resurgence with the emergence of digital art and the internet. The different uses of the word have one point in common: the idea of a disappearance or downgrading of the object, whether the art object of the Modernists or everyday objects or objects-images – for example the utopia of the disappearance of paper in administration or "augmented reality" through computer generated images.

Dematerialization has gradually imposed itself as an ideological paradigm, a fact whose relevance we cannot deny on one hand, but which, on the other hand, must be challenged by Benjamin's scheme regarding the

dialectical image, precisely as "augmented reality" invites us to do: without relying on the world of things, through digital manipulation, we produce things that, through this very addition, are part of the world; we produce an unreal that is also real. This is indeed the characteristic of the dialectical image that creates tension between opposites. It is exactly the same with dematerialization and the screen, that is to say the coexistence of a widespread digitization of the image and the fact that, as the aim is not only to imagine but to produce images, we need a media for it to appear on: the screen. This also applies to the engagement of contemporary art on the internet, as Florence de Meredieu writes:²⁸

The artwork is [...] increasingly dependent on new communication and presentation methods. The development of the internet, the emergence of virtual museums and galleries and the proliferation of artist websites have profoundly modified the material situation of artworks. Museography itself is changing. Art on the internet presents, in the form of images or clones, the works of the global art repertoire, but also other creations directly designed for the Web. These are often only disseminated and presented on screen.

The fact that digitization is ideologically associated with the dematerialization of the image is therefore a post-modern paradox, while its generalization, notably its extension to film, is accompanied by the proliferation of screens and further increases our fascination for the screen. The despecification of the *dispositifs* is part of this phenomenon, while the specificity of the screen continues to emerge as a key factor in our cultural practice. To sum up the studies found on the Internet, the average time spent by Europeans and Americans watching television is between 3 hours 45 minutes and 4 hours 30 minutes a day, while, between 2010 and 2013, the average time using smartphones and tablets went from 2 hours 30 minutes to 5 hours 15 minutes. Beyond these figures, we must become aware of all those hours, say 8 to 10 hours a day, that we devote to a screen that not only keeps us busy but fascinates us. It would be interesting to look at different disciplines – psychology, psychoanalysis, semiotics, etc. – to analyze this fascination. It certainly has to do with a fundamental property of iconicity according to Peirce: direct access to objects and ideas. The image, and particularly the luminous image on screen, produces a very strong attraction. When, even when driving, we feel the urge, both irresistible and stupid, to look at our Smartphone screen, we experience, at our own risk, this power of attraction that isolates us from other activities. The screen hypnotizes us and, like hypnosis, it monopolizes our consciousness, which, in some way, it removes from us. It alienates us.

But we must not forget the *dispositif* that serves as a framework to the method of on-screen presentation or, rather, the *dispositifs* (plural), which serve as a medium for iconic representations, including text and hypertext, which, ultimately, also become iconic. It is this aspect that I now wish to pursue further. While objects with an embedded screen are the output of intangible digital coding, the image transmitted has a double materiality relating to iconicity and to the object-screen and to its different categories, as the idea of presentation of the representation would encourage us to think, especially since, in the examples studied by Louis Marin, the architectural medium interacts with representation. Considering the divide between contemplation and distraction, which establishes the difference between painting and film, Benjamin assigns to architecture, given its role as a "prototype of a work of art, whose reception takes place via distraction and via the collective,"²⁹ and given its persistence unlike the forms of art that have fallen into disuse (such as tragedy), given also that it is received at a "double level: through use and perception, or better yet: tactically and optically,"³⁰ a central role in the technaesthetic definition³¹ of cinema. The tactile (or haptic) relationship, that, in reference to Alois Riegl, Benjamin placed next to optics, is a key element here. It accompanies the manifestation of a material desire for the object, expressed through a physical contact that takes advantage of its proximity. To quote Charles Peirce, it is a relationship of "physical connection" that is characteristic of indexicality. The indexicality link varies according to

the more or less close proximity with the object and the nature of the latter. Telepathy is a form of indexicality, which is supposed to place two connected spirits at a distance, like pointing your finger at someone or something that can be near or far. A specific area of science deals with these relationships of proximity of the body in space or through the eyes: proxemics, a natural ally of semiotics. It notably aims at studying how, in different human communities, how we situate ourselves in the home, how we cross our own threshold, our bodily attitudes in situations of over proximity or the exchanges of glances between individuals.³²

The relationship to the screen combines optics and haptics, iconicity and indexicality. Current technological research shows how these two functions are taken into account in a way that, according to Benjamin's observations, combines both use and perception. We indeed experience a proliferation of screens, both in terms of functionality (multifunctionality) and design: miniature, large, extra large and flexible screens, screens embedded in an object or projected, head-mounted displays (HMDs), etc. The TV screen was first an object, a cube integrated into furniture and used as such by artists (Nam June Paik in particular), while we now increasingly try to reduce it to the thickness of a sheet of paper, or even to a mere projection on a surface. However, this dematerialization is accompanied by a reverse trend towards miniaturization, in order to create an object that fits in the hand, such as the Smartphone. We know that there are two visual systems, ambient vision and focal vision, which Marc Jeannerod described as follows:³³

Without focal vision, ambient vision would be limited to the mere detection of changes occurring in the outside world [...]. Without ambient vision, focal vision would be as impaired as someone attempting to study a painting in a dark room with the help of a thin beam of light. Ocular motility is one of the essential links between these two types of vision. It necessarily results from ambient vision, as the saccade is the corollary of any stimulation of the peripheral retina; it is responsible for focal vision, since the fixation on a point of the visual world is the condition for the analysis and recognition of objects.

Certain screens use ambient vision, others use focal vision. We do not watch a film in the same manner as when our gaze is fixed on the small rectangle screen of our Smartphone or when our eye is invited to seek focus points over a wide area. According to the psychophysiology of vision, the difference can be measured in terms of ocular motility, which is strongly accentuated by large screens.

3D experiences through *dispositifs* that are both that of the original film and modified by the possibilities offered by digital technology play both on the perception of volume and the protuberance of beings and things, summoning haptics within optics, and on the extension of ambient vision in the periphery, while the *dispositifs* that keep us at a distance from the spectacular while strongly convening aesthetics, aim at a kind of immersion that is the opposite to our relationship with handheld smartphones. In the same way, until recently, the various screens that are part of our daily life were also centred on the optical relationship – a relationship that causes a peculiar kind of fascination that is perfectly illustrated by the credits of the French TV programme *Les Enfants de la télé* where a baby kisses a television screen – while the tactile relationship was devoted to the keyboard, thus passing through the symbolic sieve of language. We have now entered the era of "touch," the tactile relationship being the most direct physical connection that is: the contact of the finger(s) with the sensitive surface of the screen. Although the optical relationship has not yet been superseded, the fascination for the screen, which has now multiplied, continues.

To conclude with a few remarks that may require to be developed in a new paper and, using Benjamin's scheme regarding the dialectical image, that is to say the idea of a tension between opposites, we find that there are different forms of contrariety: it ranges from simple difference to radical opposition, through all kinds of intermediate levels. The most important is therefore the idea of tension and the fact of knowing whether the rela-

relationship maintains the elements in some kind of abeyance, because they are somewhat equal, or if a process of interaction, or even fusion, is taking place. In terms of scheme, one then switches from the dialectical image, which Benjamin also referred to as "dialectics at a standstill," to the Hegelian *Aufhebung* characterized by an interplay between suppression and conservation that also comprises of different figures. Thanks to these epistemological tools, it seems possible to associate the reflections on the paradigms of despecification and dematerialization as follows. The specificity of a *dispositif* characterizes a state of stability in the tension between various more or less competing functions, for example use and reception, optics and haptics, distance and immersion, iconicity and indexicality, etc. The history of technology testifies to an interplay between suppression and conservation regarding these parameters, which can lead to the recession of some *dispositifs* as well as the emergence of new ones. It also testifies to the coexistence of more or less contradictory *dispositifs* when reduced to an idea, for example the coexistence of the Imax cinema screen and the touch screen of a Smartphone. From the point of view of use, what is theoretically contradictory proves perfectly compatible. Finally, as for dematerialization, when seen in the spectrum of diversified specificities, it appears to be inseparable from a persistent materiality, both from the point of view of the use of the object and the signs it carries.

Notes

¹ Translation: Nick Cowling et Marie-Noëlle Dumaz.

² Dominique Chateau, "Paradigmes théoriques et innovation technologique," lecture given at the conference *The Impact of Technological Innovation*, Cinémathèque québécoise, Arthemis/Grafics, Montréal, 1-6 November 2011.

³ See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1962.

⁴ Raymond Bellour, "Cinema, Alone / Multiple Cinemas," in *Alphaville. Journal of Film and Screen Media*, no. 5, Summer 2013, p. 2.

⁵ Id., *La Querelle des dispositifs. Cinéma - installations, expositions*, P.O.L., Paris 2012, p. 14.

⁶ George Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic. An Institutional Analysis*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca-London 1974, p. 31.

⁷ Louis Marin, *Opacité de la peinture. Essais sur la représentation au Quattrocento*, USHER, Paris 1989, pp. 10-11.

⁸ Idem, p. 166.

⁹ Idem, p. 148.

¹⁰ Jean-Louis Baudry, *Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus* [1970], *The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in the Cinema* [1975], in Philip Rosen (ed.), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, Columbia University Press, New York 1985.

¹¹ Frank Kessler, "La Cinématographie comme dispositif (du) spectaculaire," in *CiNéMAS : revues d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2003, p. 24.

¹² Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *L'Image précaire. Du dispositif photographique*, Seuil, Paris 1996, p. 105.

¹³ Jean Davallon, *L'Exposition à l'œuvre. Stratégie de communication et Médiation symbolique*, L'Harmattan, Paris 1999, p. 11.

¹⁴ Idem, p. 286.

- ¹⁵ Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," radio broadcast on *The Voice of America Forum Lectures: The Visual Arts*, 1960; Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," in *Art News*, 1952.
- ¹⁶ William C. Sietz, *The Art of the Assemblage*, Museum of Modern Art, New York 1961, p. 87.
- ¹⁷ André Rouillé, "Une esthétique des dispositifs," <http://www.paris-art.com>, last visit 14 February 2008.
- ¹⁸ Among the different versions of this essay, I have chosen *L'Art à l'ère de la reproduction mécanisée* [1936], the translation into French by Klossowski in Walter Benjamin, *Écrits français*, edited by Jean-Claude Monoyer, Gallimard, Paris 1991, pp. 213-214.
- ¹⁹ Walter Benjamin, *Paris, Capitale du XIX^e siècle. Le livre des passages*, edited by Jean Lacoste, Rolf Tiederman, Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris 2006.
- ²⁰ Walter Benjamin, *Écrits français*, cit., p. 213.
- ²¹ *Idem*, pp. 213-214.
- ²² Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1958.
- ²³ Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790), Reprint of the 1790 edition, Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, Hildesheim 1968.
- ²⁴ Paul Valéry, *Discours sur l'esthétique*, in *Œuvres*, edited by Jean Hytier, Gallimard, Paris 1957, vol. 1, p. 1311.
- ²⁵ Paul Valéry, *Léonard et les philosophes. Lettre à Léo Ferrero*, in *Variété III*, Gallimard, Paris 1936, p. 151. In English, see Paul Valéry, *Selected Writings*, trans. Malcolm Cowley, New Directions Publishing Corporation, New York 1964.
- ²⁶ Lucy Lippard, John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," in *Art International*, 12, no. 2, February 1968, pp. 31-36. Reprinted in Lucy Lippard, *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism*, Dutton, New York 1974, pp. 225-276.
- ²⁷ Exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, 28 March 1985-15 July 1985, curated by CCI (Centre de Création Industrielle), Jean-François Lyotard and Thierry Chapuis. Catalogue published by CCI and the Pompidou Centre, 1985.
- ²⁸ Florence de Meredieu, "Dématisation de l'œuvre d'art," in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, <http://www.youscribe.com/catalogue/dictionnaires-encyclopedies-annuaires/savoirs/definition-et-synonyme-de-dematerialisation-de-l-oeuvre-d-art-2267579>, last visit 14 february 2008.
- ²⁹ Walter Benjamin, *Écrits français*, cit., p. 215.
- ³⁰ *Ibidem*.
- ³¹ Combining the words *technè* and *esthétique* (Valéry), the term *technesthétique*, *technaesthetics* in English, refers to the specific form of sensibility that technology produces. See Edmond Couchot, *La Technologie dans l'art. De la photographie à la réalité virtuelle*, Jacqueline Chambon, Nîmes 1998, p. 8.
- ³² See Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, Double Day Anchor Book, New York 1966.
- ³³ Marc Jeannerod, *Les Deux mécanismes de la vision*, in Marcel Blanc (ed.), *La Recherche en neurobiologie*, Seuil/La Recherche, Société d'Éditions scientifiques, Paris 1977, p. 89.

“Do You See What I See?:” The Neglected Issue of Capturing and Evaluating Spectator Experience

Across more than a century of reflection on cinema and its obvious massive appeal to audiences, surprisingly little attention has been paid to what individual spectators report of their experience. This is obviously due to the declared aim of most “audience research,” which has been – as it still is – to arrive at a ranking of majority preferences, or at least to identify the attitudes of significant groupings within the film audience. Hence, for example, the detailed surveys that Sidney Bernstein carried out among patrons of his British cinema chain between 1929 and 1937, were reported primarily in terms of the preferences among stars they revealed, with Gary Cooper and Norma Shearer confirmed as the most popular, and the former declared “steady throughout both sexes and in all age groups.”¹ Bernstein’s surveys had in fact captured respondents’ gender, age group, frequency of attendance and other preferences – which were no doubt studied by the cinema chain to in order to improve its performance – but the headline emphasis was inevitably on shared preferences. If a majority of cinemagoers liked Cooper and Shearer, did this not point to an underlying uniformity of perception and taste? I want to suggest that the cumulative effect of such aggregated findings has reinforced a long-held belief that film viewers do in some sense have uniform experiences. The fact that films were distributed internationally from the outset, along with the sheer scale of their consumption and broadly similar patterns of popularity, has encouraged the view that they offer similar pleasures to all their consumers. Industrial practice, with its emphasis on maximising appeal through test screenings and the analysis of marketing campaigns and box-office performance, has tended to support this goal. And despite the evidence that journalistic discourse during the golden age of fan culture of the inter-war years clearly recognised a variety of different interests among filmgoers, mainstream criticism has subsequently tended to reinforce the assumption of a universal or undifferentiated response. The “we” traditionally invoked or implied by critics suggests that all or most spectators will have the same experience, even if they may value it differently. In retrospect, it is clear that the rise of post-World War Two film theory turned attention away from the sociological-anthropological approach that had hitherto played an important part in understanding the fascination

of cinema. In fact, two highly influential manifestos of the mid-1970s, Nick Browne's analysis of the "spectator-in-the-text" in *Stagecoach* and Laura Mulvey's psychoanalytic account of "visual pleasure" in classic Hollywood films, both focused on the role of the spectator. Browne demonstrates how point of view obliges the viewer to adopt a moral position towards the characters, while Mulvey explores how gendered "pre-existing patterns of fascination" are activated by the structure of "looks" in, especially, star-driven melodrama. Both accounts were, and despite qualification, remain persuasive in accounting for the complexity of our responses to such films. But they offer *models* of spectatorship, drawing on wider theories of representation and sexuality, and as such belong to the humanities tradition of negotiating textual and cultural analysis in the light of ideological and aesthetic positions. In this respect, the film spectator is akin to the model reader of literary texts or viewer of painting and sculpture. Sometimes invoked as "s/he" in post-feminist writing, such a spectator is indeed a hybrid, or perhaps a straw figure.

Where then does the – or a – specific viewer stand today amid so many competing accounts of spectatorship. Does it make sense to measure *my* experience of watching *Stagecoach* or of receiving the "direct erotic rapport" of Dietrich in *Morocco*, as described by Mulvey, against these now-canonic theoretical templates? Or to collect the responses of a cross-section of viewers and analyse these, in order to "test" the validity of such models? It would be as simplistic to posit a blunt choice between *a priori* spectatorial theory and empirical response as it would be to insist on either of these as the "only" way of analysing filmic reception. There is ample evidence in current film culture of a turn away from abstract theory towards articulating individual points of view and offering personal testimony. But in Kant's famous formulation, "thoughts without intuitions are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind," and this trend raises questions about what such concepts may be.² To try to answer this, let me turn first to the kind of evidence we have from historic filmgoing. This broadly divides into two genres: personal writing, typically in journals and letters; and interviews or replies to questionnaires or researchers' appeals for testimony. Letters and diaries, the least "mediated" of all, almost inevitably tend to be from those whom posterity has deemed worth preserving and publishing.

Consider, as examples of the former category, the following. The first is a postcard from 1904, sent by the Russian Symbolist writer Aleksandr Blok to explain how he had been "ambushed" by a film show in St Petersburg on his way to visit a friend:

*Yesterday I set off for your place. I suddenly saw that cinema on Liteinaya Street. I went I and watched the moving pictures for about an hour. I sensed a kind of symbolism in it all, but nevertheless I resolved to overcome all the obstacles lying in wait for me [...] the thing to do is to trick yourself into slipping past them.*³

Here Blok vividly records the temptation that many felt in the early years of moving picture exhibition, to "drop in" and engage with this new form of spectacle or diversion. Coming from the period before there were specific named or advertised films, it reminds us that the "cinema experience" in all its chaotic heterogeneity was a powerful attraction, and that this attraction was not only felt by the poor and ill-educated, but by at least some members of the intelligentsia.

Another example, preserved in this case against the wishes of its author, comes from the diary of Franz Kafka, apparently an occasional cinemagoer in Prague in the 1910s.⁴ One entry records his response to a programme in 1913:

*20 November. Was at the cinema. Wept. Lolotte. The good pastor. The little bicycle. The reconciliation of the parents. Was tremendously entertained. Before that a sad film, The Accident at the Dock, after it the amusing Alone at Last. I am completely empty and meaningless, the electric tram passing by has more living feeling.*⁵

Hans Zischler has identified the films mentioned here as *L'Enfant de Paris* (France 1913), *Katastrofen I Dokken* (Denmark 1913) and *Endlich allein, oder Isidors Hochzeitsreise* (Germany 1913).⁶ Such diversity was typical of cinema programmes at this time, but normally we have no way of accessing what their audiences *felt* about the films they were seeing, much less purely private responses not intended for others' eyes. We might think Kafka's response extreme, atypical (and inevitably "Kafkaesque" in light of what we know about his writing), but in fact we have no way of knowing whether others seeing such films in Prague or in any other city might not have had equivalent personal reactions; and the evidence of present-day private responses – as distinct from those addressed to others – do reveal that these can be unpredictable and emotional (see below, from *Open Our Eyes*). A third example comes from a letter sent by the playwright Eugene O'Neill to a female correspondent in 1914, immediately after seeing one of the great Italian spectacle films of the early 1910s, *Cabiria*:

*I went to see Cabiria [...] last night and returned with a much fairer opinion of the artistic value of the movies. The picture is simply stupendous. The acting is excellent – far above any I have ever seen done by an American company – and the scenery is wonderful. Hannibal's army crossing the Alps, the destruction of the Roman fleet at Syracuse by the reflecting mirrors of Archimedes, the temple of Moloch at Carthage, the desert expedition of the King of Cirta, the siege of Carthage by Scipio – all of these are done with the grimmest realism and are blood-stirring in their gripping action.*⁷

Written almost like a review, at time when O'Neill was briefly studying dramatic writing at Harvard and tasting his first dramatic success, his letter records a general judgement on the "artistic value" of cinema, but also vividly conveys how *Cabiria* impressed a highly articulate individual among its vast audiences around the world in 1914-1915.⁸

What these three very different examples point to is the obvious value of immediate responses, not revised by later experience or modified by memory. They also record aspects of film viewing that have been largely excluded from the historical and critical record – the casualness of cinemagoing; the experience of being overcome by emotion by a film while alone in the darkness of the cinema; and of being rewarded by a heavily-promoted film exceeding expectations (O'Neill relates that he paid "50 centavos," or considerably more than the normal price of admission at this time).

Another category of response is what may be collected by a survey or an invitation to evaluate filmgoing experience. One of the earliest attempts to study the film audience in this way was by a pioneer German sociologist Emilie Altenloh, who sent questionnaires to 2,400 inhabitants of Mannheim in 1912-1913.⁹ This is one of the responses, from a fitter, quoted in full:

Do you go to the cinema? How often? On your own or with others?

Cinema now and then, but not on my own.

When do you usually go to the cinema (day of week, time of day)?

On weekdays between 8 30 and 11 pm.

What kinds of film do you like best?

Love dramas, stories about trappers and Red Indians, current news from around the world and films about aviation and airship travel.

What have been your favourites?

*Das Leben im Paradies/Life in Paradise, Fremde Schuld/Strange Guilt, Die keusche Susanna/Chaste Susanna and Moderne Eva/Modern Eve, all four-acters.*¹⁰

Which cinema do you like best? Why?

The Saalbau, it's dark, with a nice programme.

Altenloh's survey stands at the beginning of a century of similar inquiries into cinemagoing habits and preferences, many of which were initially undertaken with an agenda: to collect information about the "effects" of cinemagoing, usually assumed to be undesirable. In Britain, a self-appointed group known as the National Council of Public Morals published a report on "the present position and future possibilities" of cinema in 1917, noting as their justification "the strong and particular grip which the picture palace has taken on the people of this country."¹¹ Among the many witnesses called to testify, there appear to have been only four children "examined" as cinemagoers. Aged between 11 and 14, these two girls and two boys were clearly being invited to comment on the moral climate of cinemas rather than on how they related to the film experience; yet one of the girls says she likes films of "the tragedy variety," citing one title; while the other demurs from the suggestion that she likes all of Chaplin's films ("it all depended on what parts he took in them"); and a boy rejects the idea that he would "always want to be the hero" of a film.¹² These voices of cinema's first generation of regular attenders, very much in a minority in this context, already challenge assumptions of a uniform uncritical response. Another study of the effects of cinema was undertaken in the United States in 1933, by the National Committee for the Study of Social Values in Motion Pictures.¹³ The University of Chicago sociologist Herbert Blumer, defended a methodology that relied on "movie autobiographies:"

The customary methods of study used in social and psychological science have not seemed to be of much promise. In this investigation the writer has dispensed with sophisticated techniques. He has simply asked people to relate or write as carefully as possible their experiences with motion pictures. Typical sets of these accounts furnish the bulk of the report and are allowed in the main to convey their own significance. With the accounts at hand the reader may judge for himself the reasonableness of the interpretations made by the author.¹⁴

While the analysis that *Movies and Conduct* delivered would substantially support the "evil influence" preoccupation that was shared on both sides of the Atlantic, the autobiographies collected and quoted tell a more benign – and more varied – version of cinema's dialogue with its most regular attenders. Respondents recall how their play as children, their dress and behaviour, and their transition into adult life, were all shaped by film viewing. But of course *differently* shaped for each individual: the evidence points to a common degree of influence, but not to any single resulting pattern of behaviour. Not only the fruits of Blumer's methodology are of lasting value, but so is the theoretical tradition to which he belonged, known as symbolic interactionism, following the work of his distinguished Chicago predecessor G. H. Mead. If the individual's social reality is constructed by interaction with the world, as Mead and Blumer believed, and since the imaginative world of most generations since the early 20th century has been strongly shaped by film viewing, it follows that individuals' *interaction* with films must play an important part in shaping their identity. Rather than see the film as a fixed "object," what matters from a symbolic interactionist perspective is the meaning it has for the individual. Before considering further the implications of this view, it may be worth sketching the subsequent development of film viewers' subjective testimony. Started in Britain in the late 1930s, the Mass Observation movement proposed an "anthropological study of our own civilisation," using first-hand observation, questionnaires and interviews; and between 1937 and 1945 it produced some fifty reports on the habits and preferences of British filmgoers.¹⁵ Two studies in particular are of great value: a 1938 Bolton cinemagoing questionnaire and a 1943 "directive," asking respondents to list six films they had liked best during the past year. The number of responses is relatively small in both cases, but their variety, and candour, testifies to a lively range of different attitudes within the broad shared preferences that were, for instance, reflected in Bernstein's survey.¹⁶ At the end of World War Two, a refugee German-born sociologist in Britain, J. P. Mayer, would revive Blumer's methodology, inviting readers of the fan magazine *Photoplay* to send in their autobiographies, which formed the

basis of two studies on the long-term "constitutive" impact of film.¹⁷ Among many revealing accounts, which often include a traumatic early memory, one woman recalls a scene in *White Zombie* (1932), which she must have seen nearly fifteen years earlier as a young teenager, with visceral precision:

*When the corpses, acting under the villain's influence worked the sugar presses with horrible mechanical apathy, their dead eyes staring ahead glassily, the shuffling of their feet and the creaking of the press as their bodies leaned against it [with] a sound like a moan of distress followed by a pathetic whisper.*¹⁸

The same correspondent was able to summarise her response to "spiritual themes" and scenes in different films:

*I am easily moved by spiritual themes which arouse the desire to weep, not is sadness but if a form of ecstasy difficult to explain. Song of Bernadette did this form me as did certain scenes in A Canterbury Tale.*¹⁹

The section of Mayer's *Audiences* book which quotes from sixty of the 200 autobiographies he received is entitled "Film and the Pattern of Life," and gives a strong sense of how films are interiorised and "accompany" people, especially through the formative stages of their lives, from adolescence to forming partnerships. From the self-analyses offered, it becomes clear that significant films "answer" felt interests and needs. Watching a film is more like a *transaction* between the viewer and the text in which each is modified by the engagement.²⁰ More recent empirical support for this view was provided by a large-scale study of the place of film in national life, *Opening Our Eyes*, carried out in the UK in 2011.²¹ Among many questions about film viewing habits and preferences, respondents were asked to comment on a specific film that had "significance" for them, and also to identify a film they had watched three or more times. Among the conclusions drawn were:

*that individuals have their attitudes, and even long-term behaviour, changed as a result of encountering specific films. A man aged 35-44 who first saw Gallipoli as part of a school history lesson, was so moved by this "very, very powerful film" that he "purchased it on DVD as an adult" and continues to watch it regularly. A 25-34 year-old woman recalls how seeing Penny Marshall's film Awakenings, based on Oliver Sacks's book about the treatment of long-term coma patients, "made me re-evaluate my life."*²²

The films that trigger such deep responses vary greatly, as do the forms of response: Bette Middler's *Beaches*, about single-parenthood, meant a great deal to a 35-44 woman; a "reminder to mothers that life is short and every moment spent with children is to be valued." For a 55-64 year-old woman, Andrea Arnold's *Fish Tank* "made you realise what some people's lives are like, if you just see them on the street you would have no idea of the problems they have." The phrases "made me rethink my life," "opened my eyes to," "made me decide to" recur through hundreds of responses in our survey.

Opening Our Eyes confirmed the "transactional" nature of film spectatorship, with many examples of viewers being influenced by their own background and experience. *Avatar* ranked third overall in terms of films that affected respondents, with a considerable variety of responses: two respondents found it "inspiring" and three spoke of it "opening their eyes" to what man is doing to the environment, while one of these was reminded "that there are people that still live off the land like the natives in the film, and it is important to protect their way of life." One woman saw it in the cinema with her fiancé "and it made us cry [...] reminding us of all the horrid things humanity is doing." It reminded one man aged 65-74 of "the persecution of the native Americans," and an African man aged 35-44 interpreted *Avatar*'s fictional planet Pandora as "a civilisation invaded because of their minerals."

Recent developments in film technology have focused renewed attention on issues of spectator experience in at least three important ways. Perhaps the most obvious is the arrival of digital cinema 3D, accompanied by a revival of emphasis on the "big screen" and immersive sound. *Avatar* and its successors have returned many viewers to a sense of immersion and foregrounded the actual experience of viewing; and what little research there has been on this confirms that it involves a qualitative shift in perceptual experience.²³

Paradoxically, however, this renewed interest in the social experience of cinema has been accompanied by a proliferation of new viewing platforms, most of which are smaller than the conventional domestic television screen – for long the most common platform for film viewing.²⁴ Laptops, tablets and phones have joined aircraft seatback screens in an array of small-scale portable viewing devices, which all rely on headphones for sound. This trend has provoked a number of well-publicised protests by filmmakers who ideally want their films seen under cinema conditions; but it amounts to a revolution in viewing habits that has been viewer-led, and has almost certainly produced a substantial increase in actual film viewings. What is missing from the debate is empirical research on levels of satisfaction and "immersion" achieved while viewing on portable devices.²⁵

The third new development in spectator experience has been the dramatic growth in discourse channels due to the internet and its many interactive formats. Blogs, chatrooms, crowd-sourced websites and social media platforms have all expanded the field of discourse around film to an unprecedented degree, and have led some to lament a "loss of critical authority."²⁶ The once-central position of critics writing in prestigious newspapers and journals has certainly been eroded by digitally-enabled discourse around film; but it may be an illusion to regard earlier eras as subservient to "critical authority."²⁷ Fan magazines and other sources of informal information about cinema have always been more important to the culture of cinema than academic film studies realised – until the recent emergence of fan studies and of "videographic" criticism through mash-ups.²⁸

If these developments call into question the traditional humanities practice of criticism, they also challenge the scientific study of spectatorship or "audiencehood." Since Blumer and Mayer were accused of relying on "unscientific" or unquantifiable data from personal testimony, audience research has proliferated and diversified – partly towards instrumentalised "market research" and also in favour of more nuanced qualitative studies. Cognitive science also now offers a range of new techniques to measure physiological and behavioural responses to stimuli.²⁹ Again, we may seem to be faced with a disjunctive choice, between measuring and listening. However, I want to argue that this is a false choice; and that the future of understanding spectatorship and audiences lies in using a multiplicity of techniques to maximise the amount of information available. But it also lies in refusing simplistic models of "the spectator," and learning the lessons of symbolic interaction, dialogism, and above all the voices of spectators – including our own.

Notes

¹ Bernstein's "comprehensive questionnaire" gathered information from over 159,000 patrons of the Granada cinema chain, and asked respondents to identify themselves as male or female, and belonging to one of four age groups (under 21; 21-40; 40-60; over 60). For results of the 1937 questionnaire, see "The Customer Talks Back," in *Picturegoer*, 3 July 1937, pp. 13-14.

² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 75.

³ Aleksandr Blok writing to E. P. Ivanov, quoted in Yuri Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception*, Routledge, London 1994, p. 31.

⁴ Kafka's diaries, dating from 1910-1923, were preserved and edited by his friend Max Brod, despite Kafka's wish that all his manuscripts be destroyed. The fullest translated edition is *Diaries 1910-1923*, Schocken Classics, New York 1988.

⁵ I have combined the text of Kafka's Diaries online, <http://vgcentral.org/kafka/diaries/Diary%201913.htm>, with the extracts translated in Hanns Zischler, *Kafka Goes to the Movies*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 2003). One significant difference is that Zischler's text includes the word "wept," which does not appear in the online edition.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ "Letter from O'Neill to Beatrice Ashe," 7 October 1914, quoted in Richard Hayes, "The Scope of the Movies': Three Films and their influence on Eugene O'Neill," in *Eugene O'Neill Review*, no. 25, 2001, pp. 37-53.

⁸ On the worldwide impact of *Cabiria*, see Ian Christie, *Ancient Rome in North London*, in Pantelis Michelakis, Maria Wyke (eds.), *The Ancient World in Silent Cinema*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013.

⁹ Emilie-Kiep Altenloh (1888-1985) was a German politician and economist with strong social welfare interests. Over 1912/13 she conducted a study of cinemagoers in Mannheim, Germany, part of which involved a questionnaire sent to 2,400 cinemagoers in Mannheim asking about their gender, age, social standing, marital status, employment, religious persuasion, politics and filmgoing habits. Altenloh's methodology and conclusions continue to be of great interest to cinema historians. Her published study is in two parts, covering production and audiences. It reproduces little from the completed questionnaires: this submission from a fifteen-year-old machine-fitter is an exception. The favourite films mentioned appear to be, in order: unknown, *Um fremde Schuld. Eine Episode aus dem Leben* (Germany 1912), *Die keusche Susanna* (Germany 1911 – a one-reel synchronised sound film of the Jean Gilbert operetta, not a four-part film), and unknown, but presumably derived from the 1912 operetta *Die moderne Eva* by Victor Holländer and Jean Gilbert.

¹⁰ Reference to the film's length is highly significant at this time, when long films were starting to be produced in Germany and Italy, but were being resisted by many exhibitors. This response points to the fact that longer films were being embraced by many filmgoers.

¹¹ National Council of Public Morals, *The Cinema: Its Present Position and Future Possibilities*, Williams and Northgate, London 1917, p. XX.

¹² *Idem*, pp. 242-243.

¹³ This study was supported by Frances Payne Boulton's Payne Fund, which had previously funded research on how pulp fiction affected young female readers.

¹⁴ Herbert Blumer, *Movies and Conduct*, Macmillan, New York 1933, p. IX (accessed at http://archive.org/stream/moviesandconduct00blumrich/moviesandconduct00blumrich_djvu.txt)

¹⁵ None of these were formally published, although they were used by interested parties and are archived at the University of Sussex; extracts were collected in Jeffrey Richards, Dorothy Sheridan, *Mass Observation at the Movies*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1987.

¹⁶ The Bolton questionnaire was distributed to patrons of three cinemas, and 225 women and 304 men responded. The 1943 survey attracted responses from 104 women and 116 men, many of whom were not regular cinemagoers, or in fact disliked the experience.

¹⁷ J. P. Mayer, *Sociology of Film*, Faber, London 1946; *Id.*, *British Cinemas and their Audiences*, Denis Dobson, London 1947.

¹⁸ *Idem*, p. 28.

Do You See What I See?

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ The philosopher John Dewey, whose pragmatism had influenced the symbolic interaction position of Blumer et al., also proposed a transactionist metaphysics: "Things are what they are experienced to be." See Dewey, "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism," originally published in the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Method*, vol. 2, no. 15, July 1905.

²¹ *Opening Our Eyes: How Film Contributes to the Culture of the UK*, a report by Northern Alliance and Ipsos MediaCT for the British Film Institute, 2011. [The present writer was one of the authors]. Unlike many "audience" surveys, this study did not address only known film viewers, or inform participants that it was *about* film behaviour. It may thus be considered more objective and bias-free than any comparable recent study of attitudes to film in all its contemporary formats. Accessible online at http://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-opening-our-eyes-2011-07_0.pdf.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ Stephen Hinde's (unpublished) research in experimental psychology at Bristol University in 2011, supervised by the late Prof. Tom Troscianko, tested viewers' sense of presence" in different mediation situations and involved comparing audience responses to *Avatar* in 2D and 3D. Among his conclusions were that 'stereoscopic 3D leads of higher "presence" and that "presence becomes stronger with time in a cinema while watching *Avatar*." See also Ian Christie, *Will the 3D revolution happen?: A Brief Perspective on the Long History of Stereoscopy (with special thanks to Eisenstein and Bazin)*, in Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Techné / Technology*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2014, pp. 115-135.

²⁴ A calculation in *Opening Our Eyes* of the relative proportions of all film viewings on different platforms showed that 57% were on television screens, while only 6% were in cinemas.

²⁵ See, however, Roger Odin, *Spectator, Film and the Mobile Phone*, in Ian Christie (ed.), *Audiences: Defining and Researching Screen Entertainment Reception*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2012, pp. 155-169.

²⁶ For an early example, see the symposium convened by *Cineaste* magazine in December 2005, "Film Criticism in the age of the Internet," subtitled "Where print and new media writers debate the pros and cons of online, where everyone's a critic," at <http://www.cineaste.com/articles/film-criticism-in-the-age-of-the-internet.htm>. See also Laurent Jullier, Jean-Marc Leveratto, *Cinephilia in the Digital Age*, in Ian Christie (ed.), *Audiences*, cit., pp. 143-154.

²⁷ See the discussion following Neal Gabler, "Everyone's a critic now," in *The Observer*, 30 January 2011, at <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2011/jan/30/critics-franzen-freedom-social-network>.

²⁸ On videographic criticism/appreciation and mashups, see especially Catherine Grant's blog *Film Studies for Free*, at <http://filmstudiesforfree.blogspot.co.uk/>.

²⁹ On the prospects for cognitive studies of spectatorship, see Ian Christie, Tim J. Smith, *Exploring Inner Worlds: Where Cognitive Psychology May Take Us*, in Ian Christie (ed.), *Audiences*, cit., pp. 170-186.

Que viva Mexico! et le tournant archéologique dans l'œuvre d'Eisenstein

Dans l'histoire des études sur l'œuvre d'Eisenstein, la différence entre les écrits théoriques des années 1920 et ceux des années 1930 et 1940 est depuis longtemps matière à discussion. Déjà en 1974, dans un article publié sur la revue *Screen* sous le titre « Eisenstein's Epistemological Shift », ¹ David Bordwell formulait l'hypothèse selon laquelle le passage d'une théorie du théâtre et du cinéma centrée sur la violence des « attractions » et sur la « dynamisation » émotionnelle et intellectuelle produite par une forme filmique conçue comme agencement dramaturgique de « conflits », à une théorie du cinéma et des arts centrée plutôt sur les notions d'« organicité », d'« extase » et de « pathos », serait le résultat d'un vrai *tournant* dans la pensée d'Eisenstein : un « *epistemological shift* » qui se serait produit avec l'abandon, à la fin des années 1920, des modèles théoriques que Eisenstein avait jusque là adoptés pour l'élaboration de ses théories. La psychologie réflexologique de Vladimir Bechterev et Ivan Pavlov et le matérialisme dialectique de Engels dans lesquels Eisenstein avait cherché le cadre théorique pour expliquer l'action du montage théâtral et cinématographique sur le spectateur dans des textes comme *Le Montage des attractions* (1923), *Le Montage des attractions au cinéma* (1924), *Sur la question d'une approche matérialiste de la forme* (1925), *La Quatrième dimension au cinéma* (1929) et *Dramaturgie de la forme filmique* (1929), auraient été remplacés, dans les écrits des années 1930 et 1940, par une vision de la dialectique mettant l'accent sur la synthèse plutôt que sur le conflit, par une psychologie empirique et associationniste capable d'expliquer la formation des émotions et des concepts, et par l'intérêt pour les structures du monologue intérieur de Joyce, le « langage intérieur » étudié par Lev Vygotski et la « pensée prélogique » théorisée par Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. Ce tournant épistémologique, selon Bordwell, aurait produit dans la réflexion théorique d'Eisenstein une différente vision de l'œuvre d'art et du cinéma : les tensions, les contrastes et les collisions théorisés dans les écrits des années 1920 auraient laissé la place, dans des livres comme *Montage* (1937) et *La Non-indifférente nature* (1941-1947), à une vision du cinéma comme art synthétique, organique, pathétique et extatique. Selon cette perspective, on ne devrait pas parler de « contradictions » entre les écrits des années 1920 et les écrits ultérieurs, mais plutôt de la présence de « deux théories successives [...] produites par deux positions épistémologiques » : ² comme écrit Bordwell, « *not*

one, but two Eisensteins ».³ Quarante ans après l'article de Bordwell, la publication de parties fondamentales de l'œuvre théorique d'Eisenstein comme le livre inachevé intitulé *Méthode* (1932-1948)⁴ et les *Notes pour une Histoire générale du cinéma* (1946-1948),⁵ nous permet de revenir sur ce « shift » qui se serait produit dans la pensée du cinéaste soviétique. Nous pouvons maintenant choisir soit de nier l'existence de ce tournant, en soulignant toutes les lignes de continuité qui existent entre les écrits des années 1920 et ceux des années 1930 et 1940 – par exemple, le retour incessant sur la question du montage, la tentative constante de comprendre les lois qui régissent l'efficacité de la forme artistique, sa capacité d'agir sur le spectateur et de le transformer dans le corps et dans l'esprit, ou encore la présence continue de références à la dialectique comme modèle théorique fondamental ; soit, si nous souhaitons garder l'hypothèse de ce tournant, essayer de l'interpréter autrement, en faisant référence à des aspects de l'œuvre d'Eisenstein qui n'étaient pas connus dans les années où Bordwell écrivait son article.

Dans ce texte, je voudrais avancer l'hypothèse selon laquelle le voyage au Mexique entre décembre 1930 et février 1932 peut être interprété comme étant à l'origine, dans la pensée théorique d'Eisenstein, d'un tournant archéologique qui le conduira, après le retour en Union Soviétique en 1932, à élaborer une vision de la conscience, de la culture, de l'œuvre d'art et du cinéma en termes de « strates », de « couches », de « layers », en adoptant le terme anglais que Eisenstein utilise souvent dans ses écrits. Selon cette vision archéologique, la conscience, la culture, l'œuvre d'art et le médium cinématographique seraient caractérisés par la co-présence de stratifications historiques multiples, toujours actives et capables de coexister et de s'entremêler les unes avec les autres. Face à ces stratifications, l'artiste, le théoricien et l'historien auraient selon Eisenstein la possibilité de se déplacer dans le temps, en avant et en arrière, soit pour mobiliser ces couches dans le processus de création de l'œuvre d'art, soit pour les observer et les étudier dans tous leurs croisements, entrelacements et superpositions.

Dans les cinq sections de ce texte, nous verrons d'abord la manière dont ce que nous proposons de considérer comme un tournant archéologique dans la pensée d'Eisenstein prend forme pendant le voyage mexicain et le tournage de *Que viva Mexico!*, lors de la rencontre d'Eisenstein avec une culture, la culture mexicaine, qui lui semblait caractérisée par la coexistence de plusieurs époques différentes dont les traces étaient déployées à travers les différentes régions du Mexique. Dans la deuxième section nous verrons ensuite comment Eisenstein avait déjà rencontré une condition temporelle de ce type en Russie, lors du tournage de son film « rural », *La Ligne générale*, conçu comme célébration du processus de collectivisation de l'agriculture soviétique. La troisième section présentera une brève analyse de *Que viva Mexico!*, que nous traitons ici comme un film-travelogue qui propose une sorte de fouille archéologique à l'horizontale : une traversée des « strates » historiques de la culture mexicaine, et une tentative de les analyser et les exposer à travers le montage. La section suivante montrera comment les traces de cette vision archéologique peuvent être repérées partout dans l'œuvre théorique d'Eisenstein après le Mexique : en particulier, dans l'idée qui est au centre du livre *Méthode*, selon laquelle toute œuvre d'art vraiment efficace doit être capable de mobiliser les « couches les plus profondes »⁶ de la conscience et de la culture, et dans l'idée qui est à la base des *Notes pour une Histoire générale du cinéma* – un projet qui peut être interprété comme un exemple de *media archaeology* avant la lettre⁷ – selon laquelle l'historien du cinéma doit savoir traverser toutes les strates, jusqu'aux « lowest layers »,⁸ de son médium. La dernière section, pour finir, montrera comment le paradigme archéologique que nous avons repéré dans les écrits d'Eisenstein peut être comparé avec la manière dont Freud et Benjamin se servent de références archéologiques pour élaborer, respectivement, une « archéologie de l'âme » et une « archéologie de la culture ».⁹

Le Mexique et « la colonne verticale de l'histoire »

L'hypothèse d'un tournant archéologique dans la pensée d'Eisenstein trouve son point d'ancrage dans la manière dont le cinéaste soviétique décrit à plusieurs reprises, dans les écrits des années 1930 et 1940, la culture mexi-

caine comme une culture caractérisée par la co-présence, la superposition et le mélange entre stratifications historiques différentes qui coexistent les unes à côté des autres. Cette idée est formulée avec grande clarté dans un passage du livre *Montage* qui mérite d'être cité en entier :

[*Que viva Mexico!*] était construit comme un collier, comme la succession de lignes de couleurs vives des manteaux mexicains, les sarape, ou comme une suite de brèves nouvelles [...]

Cette chaîne de nouvelles était tenue ensemble par une série d'idées dominantes, et procédait selon une séquence historique qui était conçue comme succession non pas d'époques chronologiques mais de zones géographiques. Parce que la culture au Mexique est comme un éventail ouvert sur la surface du territoire à partir de la colonne verticale de l'histoire. Certaines des parties du pays se sont conservées, du point de vue de la culture et de la vie quotidienne, comme devait l'être tout le pays pendant certaines étapes de son développement historique.

Ainsi, en voyageant du Yucatan aux tropiques de Tehuantepec, de ces tropiques au haut plateau central, des champs de bataille de la guerre civile au nord jusqu'à la très moderne Cité de Mexico, on a l'impression de se déplacer dans le temps plutôt que dans l'espace. La structure, l'aspect, la culture, les coutumes de ces parties de la fédération semblent appartenir, respectivement, à la période préhistorique, à l'époque précolombienne, à l'époque de Cortès, à la période féodale de la domination espagnole, et à la période de la lutte pour l'indépendance.

Le film avait été conçu de la même manière : comme une série d'épisodes brefs qui traversaient toutes ces gradations historiques ; des épisodes qui surgissaient naturellement du caractère, de l'aspect et des coutumes des différentes parties du pays.¹⁰

Ce passage – un exemple typique des « *post-analyses* » avec lesquelles Eisenstein dans ses écrits retourne sans cesse sur ses propres films, afin d'en comprendre pleinement le sens et le potentiel encore à explorer – nous présente *Que viva Mexico!* comme un film conçu selon une structure ornementale : celle d'un collier, ou encore celle d'un *sarape*, manteau mexicain dont les lignes colorées juxtaposées évoquent déjà une idée de stratification. Ces deux formes ornementales sont prises comme modèle pour l'articulation d'un film qui aurait proposé au spectateur un parcours en même temps *géographique* et *historique* : une suite de déplacements dans l'espace qui étaient aussi des déplacements dans le temps, à travers les différentes régions d'un pays dans lequel « la géographie s'[était] substituée à l'histoire », à tel point qu'en voyageant à travers le territoire mexicain on avait l'impression de voyager « simultanément dans le temps et à travers les siècles de l'histoire ». ¹¹ Avec cette structure, *Que viva Mexico!* était censé reproduire la caractéristique de la culture mexicaine qui avait le plus frappé Eisenstein : le fait que les époques historiques et les stades de développement que cette culture avait traversés, et qu'on pouvait imaginer disposés verticalement dans une « colonne verticale de l'histoire » que Eisenstein pense vraisemblablement selon le modèle archéologique de la Colonne Trajane, se trouvaient dépliés « comme un éventail ouvert sur la surface du territoire », les uns à côté des autres.

Face à cette condition spatio-temporelle tout à fait particulière, *Que viva Mexico!* – un film ayant pour but de « représenter par images, dans toute leur richesse, les annales de l'histoire de la Nouvelle Espagne tracées sur la géographie du Mexique républicain d'aujourd'hui » ¹² – aurait dû démontrer la capacité du cinéma à se proposer, grâce au procédé du montage, comme instrument historiographique. Un instrument capable d'*enregistrer, monter et montrer l'histoire* : d'enregistrer toutes les traces des couches temporelles de la culture mexicaine, de les agencer les unes avec les autres dans les épisodes du film, et d'en exposer tous les effets de juxtaposition, superposition, entrelacement, hybridation.

L'histoire telle qu'Eisenstein la rencontre au Mexique est une histoire *spatialisée*, une histoire qui peut être conçue et étudiée en termes *topographiques* et *archéologiques* : comme présence visible dans l'espace de traces matérielles et de lieux qui renvoient à des stades et des couches historiques successives mais coexistantes. Il s'agit d'une histoire qui n'est pas linéaire, mais plutôt déployée sur une surface géographique à parcourir dans

toutes les directions en se déplaçant d'une région à une autre, et donc simultanément d'une époque à une autre, en avant et en arrière dans le temps. Face à cette histoire spatialisée mais non-linéaire, faite de lieux visibles et matériels, *Que viva Mexico!* peut être considéré comme une tentative d'effectuer une fouille archéologique qui procède à l'horizontale plutôt qu'à la verticale, en largeur plutôt qu'en profondeur. Comme Eisenstein l'écrit dans ses *Mémoires*, l'histoire rendue visible par *Que viva Mexico!* est une « histoire de la transformation d'une culture, donnée non pas à la verticale – en années et siècles, mais à l'horizontale – selon une cohabitation géographique des stades les plus divers de la culture ».¹³

Les images tournées pour les différentes « nouvelles » du film, aussi bien que les centaines de dessins réalisés par Eisenstein pendant les 14 mois passés au Mexique, peuvent donc être considérés comme le résultat d'une traversée archéologique des « layers » de la culture mexicaine. Mais avant d'aborder l'analyse des stratifications archéologiques de *Que viva Mexico!* et les traces que ces stratifications laisseront dans l'œuvre successive d'Eisenstein, il est nécessaire de prendre brièvement en considération la période qui précède le voyage mexicain, parce que la vision d'une culture composée de couches historiques juxtaposées et coexistantes, et l'idée que le cinéma peut être conçu comme instrument historiographique capable d'agencer ces différentes époques, s'annoncent dès les années 1926-1929, années au cours desquelles Eisenstein travaillait au film *La Ligne générale* et s'interrogeait sur le spécificité de ce film « rural ».

Les « cinq époques »

Eisenstein fut chargé de tourner le film *La Ligne générale* à l'issue du Quatorzième Congrès du Parti Communiste Soviétique, qui s'était tenu en décembre 1925. Dans son discours au Congrès, Staline avait indiqué comme éléments essentiels de la « ligne générale » pour la construction d'une économie socialiste l'industrialisation de l'agriculture et la formation de « coopératives » (les *kolkhozes*) qui devraient remplacer toute forme d'exploitation agricole privée dans les campagnes. Le film était censé montrer les avantages et célébrer le succès de ce double processus d'industrialisation et de collectivisation, transformation qui devait faire date dans le démantèlement de structures productives et sociales qui s'étaient consolidées au cours des siècles. Eisenstein commença à travailler au film dans l'été 1926, et fut ensuite obligé d'interrompre le tournage en décembre 1926, pour se consacrer au nouveau projet dont il avait été chargé : tourner un film pour le dixième anniversaire de la Révolution d'Octobre. *La Ligne Générale* ne sera terminé qu'en 1929, et il sortira dans les salles avec un autre titre, *L'Ancien et le nouveau*, parce que entre temps la « ligne générale » établie en 1925 avait changé : de l'appel à la formation des *kolkhozes* on était passé à la collectivisation forcée et au déplacement de millions de paysans, avec les conséquences catastrophiques qu'on connaît.

Dans un article publié dans la *Pravda* le 6 juin 1926 sous le titre *Les Cinq époques*,¹⁴ Eisenstein présenta au public soviétique le but et les problèmes posés par ce film rural. Après avoir rappelé que le cinéma – « le plus important des arts » – devait être conçu en Union Soviétique comme « un moyen, une variante, une des méthodes de la lutte » sociale et de classe, capable de « contraindre » le spectateur à « participer émotionnellement » à l'actualité politique, il souligna combien, « dans le domaine cinématographique, il n'y a pas de sujet qui ait été plus négligé que celui de la campagne. Il n'y a rien de plus ardu, ni de plus terrible pour un réalisateur. Mais en même temps, rien de plus indispensable ».¹⁵ Quant aux moyens de rendre émouvant et passionnant le processus de collectivisation et d'industrialisation de l'agriculture, Eisenstein avait choisi, pour résoudre ce problème, plusieurs stratégies convergentes, dont on peut rappeler au moins deux. En premier lieu, selon un choix sur lequel Eisenstein reviendra dans un chapitre de *La Non-indifférente nature* intitulé « La centrifugeuse et le Graal »,¹⁶ une érotisation de la relation entre les *kolkhoziens* et les machines agricoles, érotisation qui

est tout à fait évidente dans les deux séquences de la réparation du moteur du tracteur en panne et de la présentation de l'écrémeuse, dans lesquelles le rapport de la protagoniste Marfa Lapkina avec la machine industrielle est présenté comme source de pathos et de jouissance érotique. En deuxième lieu, la figuration de la coexistence et de l'affrontement entre modes de vie et cultures différentes qu'on pouvait faire remonter à différentes stratifications temporelles, avec en particulier une accentuation de l'opposition entre, d'un côté, le scepticisme, l'inertie et le fanatisme religieux stérile des paysans résistant à la formation des coopératives, et de l'autre l'énergie, la détermination et l'efficacité des jeunes kolkhoziens.

Dans *Les Cinq époques* Eisenstein rappelle que l'on avait projeté dans les salles soviétiques le film *Les Trois âges* [*Three Ages*] (1923) de Buster Keaton et Eddie Cline, un film conçu comme parodie d'*Intolérance* de Griffith (1916). Dans les deux cas, des événements qui se déroulaient dans des périodes historiques différentes étaient entrelacés à travers un montage alterné afin de traduire la dimension transhistorique de certaines passions humaines. Dans le film de Griffith, le conflit entre Balthazar et Cyrus qui mène à la chute de Babylone en 539 av. J.-C., la crucifixion de Jésus, le massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy en 1572, et la répression d'une grève au début du XX^e siècle sont présentés en alternance pour montrer et dénoncer la persistance à travers les siècles de l'intolérance. Dans le film de Keaton et Cline, trois intrigues situées à trois époques différentes – la préhistoire, la Rome antique et « l'époque moderne », les années 1920 – alternent pour démontrer que « la seule chose qui n'a pas changé depuis le début du monde est l'amour, l'axe immuable sur lequel tourne le monde ». ¹⁷ Même si *Les Trois âges*, en tant que parodie, ne pouvait pas se proposer comme modèle pour *La Ligne générale*, la manière dont il avait été capable, à la suite d'*Intolérance*, de monter ensemble des époques historiques différentes méritait d'être reprise et élevée à un autre niveau. Comme Eisenstein l'écrit dans son article de la *Pravda* :

Dans nos salles a circulé le film américain Les Trois âges. Toutes entrecroisées en une. Et cela est comique. Face au problème de l'agriculture, nous disposons des « cinq époques » de Ilitch. Toutes entrecroisées en une. Et cela est grandiose. ¹⁸

L'expression « les 'cinq époques' de Ilitch » est une référence implicite à un texte de Lénine de 1918 intitulé *Sur l'infantilisme 'de gauche' et les idées petites-bourgeoises*, dans lequel Lénine soulignait la co-présence, dans la Russie qui venait de vivre la Révolution d'Octobre, de plusieurs régimes sociaux et économiques qui avaient leurs racines dans des époques historiques différentes. Cette condition, appelée par Lénine *mnogoukladnost'* (de *mnogo*, « plusieurs », et *uklad*, « régime de vie »), était caractérisée par la coexistence de cinq structures :

1. l'économie patriarcale, c'est-à-dire, en grande mesure, l'économie naturelle, paysanne ;
2. la petite production marchande (cette rubrique comprend la plupart des paysans qui vendent du blé) ;
3. le capitalisme privé ;
4. le capitalisme d'Etat ;
5. le socialisme. ¹⁹

Si pour Lénine ce manque d'homogénéité dans la société russe était une faiblesse à dépasser – le succès du socialisme aurait dû faire *tabula rasa* de tous les régimes socio-économiques qu'on pouvait considérer comme des restes du passé pré-révolutionnaire – Eisenstein envisageait plutôt d'utiliser cette *mnogoukladnost'* comme un point de force de son film rural. Dans *La Ligne générale*, les « cinq époques » de Lénine auraient été montées les unes avec les autres, en jouant sur les conflits, les contrastes, les tensions produites par leur coexistence. Comme Eisenstein l'écrit dans la *Pravda* en 1926, il ne s'agissait pas de jouer sur l'attrait facile de « l'âge de pierre » mis à côté de la dernière découverte scientifique », parce que « ce n'est pas l'excentricité de ces combinaisons qui fascine ». Il s'agissait plutôt de produire une vraie architecture de montage capable d'entrelacer les

différentes époques qui coexistaient à l'intérieur de la Russie : « nous construisons dans toutes les cinq époques en même temps ».²⁰

La situation spatio-temporelle qui avait frappé Eisenstein au Mexique, le fait que chaque déplacement dans l'espace était aussi un déplacement dans le temps, ne lui était donc pas complètement inconnue. Lors du voyage mexicain et du tournage de *Que viva Mexico!*, Eisenstein découvrit une version accentuée de la *mnogoukladnost* russe analysée par Lénine. Les « cinq époques » de Lénine laissent la place au Mexique à des stratifications historiques visibles, matérielles et topographiquement localisées qui remontent à la préhistoire, aux civilisations pré-colombiennes, à la domination espagnole, aux années du Porfiriato (du nom du président Porfirio Díaz, qui dirigea le Mexique entre 1876 et 1911), de la guerre civile mexicaine (1910-1920), et finalement au nouveau Mexique libre et indépendant des années 1920. *Que viva Mexico!* sera la tentative de traverser et de monter, grâce à un montage conçu comme agencement de temps différents, un parcours spatio-temporel à travers toutes ces stratifications.

Que viva Mexico! : une fouille archéologique à l'horizontale

Les 60.000 mètres de rushes tournés au Mexique ne furent jamais visionnés ni montés par Eisenstein. *Que viva Mexico!* est aujourd'hui un film virtuel qu'on peut chercher d'imaginer et analyser en prenant en considération plusieurs sources : les films qui ont été montés dans les années 1930 avec le permis de l'écrivain américain Upton Sinclair, qui avait financé le projet dès le départ et qui avait gardé les rushes chez soi sans les envoyer à Eisenstein à Moscou – *Thunder over Mexico* (1933) et *Death Day* (1934) de Sol Lesser, *Time in the Sun* (1939) de Marie Seton, auteure d'une biographie d'Eisenstein, et *Mexican Symphony* (1941) de William F. Kruse ; la présentation réalisée par Jay Leyda avec des finalités de recherche, intitulée *Eisenstein Mexican Film : Episodes for Study* (1957) ; la tentative de reconstruction proposée par Grigoriï Aleksandrov en 1979, qui respecte la partition en épisodes (*Prologue, Sandunga, Fiesta, Maguey, Soldadera, Epilogue*) prévue par Eisenstein, mais qui a évidemment toutes les limites d'une reconstruction d'un original qui n'existe pas, faite en plus par un cinéaste qui entre-temps avait pris une tout autre direction par rapport à la période de sa collaboration avec Eisenstein ; les centaines de dessins réalisés par Eisenstein pendant le séjour au Mexique, dessins qui parfois sont étroitement liés au contenu des épisodes du film, et parfois s'en éloignent, en suivant des dérives qui sont néanmoins fondamentales pour comprendre les idées sur lesquelles Eisenstein réfléchit pendant le voyage mexicain et le type de montage qu'il aurait voulu expérimenter dans *Que viva Mexico!* ; enfin, les textes écrits pendant le tournage, et ceux dans lesquels Eisenstein revient sur son film inachevé dans les années qui suivent le retour à Moscou en 1932. La prise en considération de l'ensemble de ces matériaux constitue la seule manière d'approcher l'analyse d'un film comme *Que viva Mexico!*, un film virtuel qui n'a jamais atteint une forme définitive.

Le bref parcours à travers *Que viva Mexico!* que je propose maintenant se concentre sur la manière dont Eisenstein a cherché à capter la condition spatio-temporelle tout à fait particulière du Mexique : cette coexistence de stratifications historiques et culturelles déployées côte à côte sur la surface géographique du territoire. Considéré dans cette perspective, comme on l'a vu, *Que viva Mexico!* peut être interprété comme un film-travelogue qui documente les couches traversées par une fouille archéologique qui se développe à l'horizontale plutôt qu'à la verticale. Chaque épisode nous mène d'une époque à une autre, et à l'intérieur de chaque épisode le spectateur rencontre des moments dans lesquels toutes ces époques différentes se juxtaposent, se superposent, s'entrecroisent les unes avec les autres.

Le scénario de *Que viva Mexico!* publié par Eisenstein en 1934 dans la revue *Experimental Cinema*, présente le

Prologue comme étant situé dans une condition temporelle indéfinie, une condition d'immobilité dans laquelle « le passé triomphe du présent » :

Dans ce prologue, le temps, c'est l'éternité.

Ce pourrait être aujourd'hui.

Ce pourrait aussi bien être il y a vingt ans.

Il y a mille ans.

Car les habitants du Yucatan, terre couverte de ruines et d'immenses pyramides, ont conservé les traits et la silhouette caractéristiques de leurs ancêtres, la race illustre des Mayas.

Des pierres,

Des dieux,

Des hommes,

Jouent dans le prologue.

A une époque reculée...

Sur la terre du Yucatan, parmi les temples païens, les cités saintes et les pyramides majestueuses. Au royaume de la mort où le passé triomphe encore du présent : voilà le point de départ du film.²¹

À travers une série de plans fixes, statiques – on dirait presque une succession de photographies – le *Prologue* nous montre d'abord les pyramides maya de Chichén Itzá, site redécouvert au milieu du 19^e siècle par les explorateurs John Lloyd Stephens et Frederick Catherwood et ensuite objet de fouilles archéologiques de la part de Edward Herbert Thompson au début des années 1900. En s'approchant de plus en plus des ruines, jusqu'à montrer en premier plan les têtes d'animaux et de dieux sculptées sur les parois des pyramides, les plans insistent pour finir sur les ressemblances étonnantes entre les motifs décoratifs géométriques des *ponchos* mexicains et les ornements sculptés des Maya, aussi bien qu'entre les profils des *indios* du Mexique contemporain et les profils des têtes sculptés dans la pierre (figg. 18-19). Dans ce paysage archéologique, dans cette atmosphère pétrifiée, où la monumentalité des ruines semble se transmettre aux visages et aux corps des *indios*, que nous voyons ensuite donner vie à une procession funéraire qui semble hors du temps, Eisenstein présente des juxtapositions entre présent et passé qui montrent la *survivance* de motifs ornementaux et de traits physiognomoniques qui sont restés inchangé à travers les siècles. Dès le début, *Que viva Mexico!* montre à l'écran une condition de coexistence de temps différents qui reviendra, selon plusieurs formes et variations, dans tous les autres épisodes du film.

La première « nouvelle » du film, *Sandunga*, nous transporte vers un autre stade temporel : le Mexique tropical de Tehuantepec, un lieu que les idéologues du nouveau Mexique sorti de la guerre civile avaient donné en exemple de société authentique, non touchée par la violence de la domination coloniale.²² Si le *Prologue* était dominé par une monumentalité pétrifiée et pétrifiante, dans les plans de *Sandunga* tout est en mouvement et en flux : hommes, femmes, plantes, animaux, l'eau des rivières... Tehuantepec nous est présenté comme un lieu édénique d'harmonie entre l'homme et la nature, où les rythmes de la vie sociale sont régis par une communauté matriarcale qui semble fondée sur une économie du *don* : tout l'épisode, en fait, tourne autour de la constitution progressive de la dot de Concepción, la protagoniste, en préparation de son mariage avec le jeune Abundio. Dans le scénario Eisenstein insiste sur la dimension hors du temps de *Sandunga* – à Tehuantepec « on ignore le temps », un temps qui « s'écoule lentement sous l'entrelacement langoureux des palmiers et des costumes, et les coutumes ne changent pas au fil des ans »²³ – et pourtant les plans de cet épisode nous montrent encore une fois une temporalité complexe et stratifiée : d'un côté, les gestes qui accompagnent la constitution

de la dot et les rites qui accompagnent le mariage semblent répéter des traditions qui se sont transmises dans les siècles, tandis que de l'autre côté, le style des vêtements et des ornements, la manière de danser, l'orchestre qui joue la musique du bal, sont tous des éléments qui montrent combien les traditions séculaires de Tehuantepec ont été inévitablement infiltrées par des éléments provenant de la culture coloniale et par la modernité (figg. 20-21).

L'épisode *Fiesta* propose un autre déplacement spatio-temporel. Tourné dans plusieurs villes mexicaines (Mexico, Xochimilco, Merida, Taxco, Puebla, Cholula), l'action se passe, comme Eisenstein l'écrit dans le scénario, « avant la révolution de 1910 », ²⁴ et donc dans la période du Porfiriato, dans un Mexique dominé par une influence coloniale espagnole qui touche tous les domaines de la vie sociale : la religion, les arts, les spectacles populaires tels la *corrida*. Comme dans les épisodes précédents, ce que nous montrent les plans de *Fiesta* est une condition temporelle hybride. Le Mexique colonial du Porfiriato paraît en effet imprégné par plusieurs formes de survivance qui témoignent de la présence active de couches temporelles précédentes : les danses rituelles des Indiens qui participent aux célébrations en honneur de la Vierge de Guadalupe portent les traces évidentes des cultures précolombiennes, avec leurs décorations de plumes, leurs masques, leurs références explicites aux sacrifices précolombiens (fig. 22) ; les *corridos* « en honneur de la Vierge » témoignent du croisement entre la dimension païenne du spectacle tauromachique et la religion catholique, un sujet sur lequel Eisenstein reviendra à plusieurs reprises dans ses dessins mexicains, où le motif de la tauromachie est inextricablement mêlé à l'iconographie catholique de la crucifixion, et où les deux sont soumis à une série vertigineuse de variations (fig. 23) ; enfin, les plans dédiés aux processions catholiques qui remettent en scène la montée du Christ au Golgotha, mènent vers un sanctuaire, celui de la *Virgen de los Remedios* dans la ville de Cholula, qui fut construit sur les fondations de la plus grande pyramide aztèque du Mexique (figg. 24, 26). À la suite de ce qu'il avait lu dans *Idols Behind Altars* (1929), un livre écrit par une jeune journaliste américaine, Anita Brenner, qui deviendra ensuite une élève de l'anthropologue Franz Boas, initiateur des fouilles archéologiques dans le site de Teotihuacan, Eisenstein semble vouloir nous montrer la persistance d'une couche païenne pré-colombienne au-dessous de la culture coloniale catholique qui la recouvre. Même le style artistique qui est caractéristique du colonialisme espagnol, le baroque, lui semble constituer un élément de continuité et d'hybridation : dans un texte prévu pour *Méthode*, il parle du caractère excessif et « effréné » d'un baroque qui est en même temps « espagnol et aztèque », ²⁵ un baroque qui ne remonte pas à une culture d'il y a « quatre cents ans », mais plutôt à « deux, trois, quatre mille ans ». ²⁶

Dans un chapitre de *La Non-indifférente nature* intitulé *Les Kangourous*, Eisenstein revient sur les superpositions architectoniques qu'il avait rencontrées au Mexique, et les présente comme un exemple de construction « extatique » dans laquelle les formes « sortent d'elles-mêmes » (selon le principe de l'extase comme sortie d'une condition de staticité, *ek-stasis*) et s'enchaînent, se superposent, se recouvrent les unes les autres, en donnant lieu encore une fois à des stratifications temporelles :

Au système des boîtes s'encastant l'une dans l'autre et de plus en plus petites – jouet populaire surtout en Orient – répondent en « reflet spéculaire » les... pyramides, croissantes jusqu'à l'incommensurable, des peuples dont les invasions réciproques balayaient les cultures plus archaïques en érigeant sur leurs monuments pyramidaux des pyramides nouvelles de dimensions incomparablement plus grandes et qui engloutissaient les anciennes dans leur tréfonds.

Ainsi, « se coiffant » l'une l'autre, se dressent en couches superposées les pyramides du Mexique, que ce soit dans le lointain Chichen-Itza du Yucatan où cela se rapporte aux palais, ou bien au Mexique Central – près des pyramides du Soleil et de la Lune à San-Juan de Tetixuacan. Soit dit en passant, cette façon « d'ensevelir » les pyramides anciennes sous les stratifications de nouvelles, assura la totale inviolabilité des monuments appartenant aux plus anciennes étapes de la culture, enfouis qu'ils étaient, par strates, l'un au-dessous de l'autre. Au Mexique, les fouilles s'effectuent selon le plan de

coupe de ces édifices « stratifiés » et les couches inférieures révèlent un état de conservation parfaite, presque intacte. La conquête espagnole prolongea le processus en érigeant sur les pyramides des... cathédrales catholiques.²⁷

Maguey est l'épisode dont la construction suit un schéma proprement narratif, tandis que dans les autres épisodes la dimension ethnographique et documentaire prévaut sur la narration. Ici l'époque est encore celle du Porfiriato, mais le sujet change : au lieu de nous montrer les traditions de la culture coloniale espagnole et les traces de la survivance des cultures précolombiennes, Eisenstein nous montre l'oppression des *peones* de la part des propriétaires des terres dans les plaines de l'État d'Hidalgo, là où l'alcool appelé *pulque* est extrait des plantes de *maguey* selon une tradition qui, écrit Eisenstein dans le scénario, « remonte à des centaines d'années, et qui au moment où se passe cette histoire, n'a pas encore changé ».²⁸ Dans les plans qui racontent l'amour de Sebastian et Maria, le viol de Maria par un des amis du propriétaire de l'*hacienda* Tetlapayac, la rébellion des *peones*, et finalement la mort brutale de Sebastian et de ses compagnons, mi-ensevelis dans la terre et ensuite écrasés par les sabots des *charros* qui veulent se venger de la mort de Sara, la fille du propriétaire de l'*hacienda*, se glissent encore une fois des références qui bouleversent l'unité temporelle de l'épisode. La disposition sur le terrain des trois *peones* condamnés à mort renvoie directement à la disposition des trois *indios* qui, dans la procession catholique de l'épisode *Fiesta*, évoquaient la crucifixion du Christ, et le torse nu de Sebastian, prêt au sacrifice, rappelle explicitement l'iconographie du sacrifice de Saint Sébastien (fig. 25). Selon ce que Marie Seton écrit dans sa biographie,²⁹ Eisenstein aurait aussi eu l'intention de monter l'épisode de la mort de Sebastian en alternance avec les images de l'extase d'un *peon* au cours de la fête du Corpus Christi en 1931 à Tetlapayac, en produisant une chaîne d'associations entre extase mystique et souffrance corporelle, ascension spirituelle et rébellion politique.

Dans un texte intitulé « Torito » (1933-1934), rédigé dans le cadre de ses cours de mise en scène à l'Institut cinématographique d'État (GIK), après avoir souligné combien son style d'écriture était fait de digressions continues qui accompagnent le lecteur dans une sorte de voyage ethnographique à la recherche de certaines « régularités structurelles » à travers « une grande variété de pays, cultures, peuples et époques », Eisenstein revient encore une fois sur *Que viva Mexico!* pour démontrer aux étudiants du GIK la complexité des références et de stratifications temporelles qui sont mobilisées dans chaque décision qui concerne la mise en scène. Ce texte atteste clairement que, après le Mexique, Eisenstein tend à penser la forme artistique comme composition de couches temporelles qui se cachent derrière la surface et que l'analyse doit savoir dévoiler :

L'inéluctable guette le péon Sébastien et son groupe d'amis. Et sous l'influence de ce motif, je choisis parmi toute la variété de couleurs et de formes du vêtement mexicain... le blanc : le sarape blanc [fig. 27]. Ce thème du rapport entre le blanc, l'inéluctable et le deuil remonte aussi à des impressions et des souvenirs anciens. Autrefois j'avais été frappé d'apprendre que chez les Chinois la couleur du deuil n'est pas le noir, mais le blanc. Je me rappelle tout particulièrement le dernier acte de l'opéra La Khovanchtchina lorsque, tous voués à la mort, les raskolnikis vêtus de chemises blanches se font brûler dans l'izba. Et on ne sait d'où – un fragment de vers sacré (peut-être de ce même opéra ou d'un roman) : « ... Revêtez les blanches chasubles ». En tout cas ce fragment de vers m'a hanté dans toute cette atmosphère hispano-aztèque-tolèque, lorsque se décidait la réalisation des costumes des peons condamnés.

Je me souviens avec précision encore d'un autre moment « suggestif ». C'est sous son influence, visiblement, que je me suis remémoré les chemises blanches de la Khovanchtchina qui sont passées dans le manteau-sarape. Un prospectus de souscription au dictionnaire encyclopédique américain Webster me tombe sous la main au Mexique. Sur la feuille publicitaire tous les moyens étaient utilisés pour attirer les souscripteurs : depuis les chiffres astronomiques de la quantité de mots et d'illustrations, jusqu'aux exemples de définitions étymologiques. Voici par exemple que notre mot bien connu de « candidat » remonte à l'époque romaine et est étroitement lié à la notion de... pureté et de vertu (quelle ironie!). Cette

dernière qualité, dans la pratique électorale d'alors, se traduisait par les éblouissantes toges blanches que portaient les candidats, symbole de leur probité, de leur honnêteté et de leur pureté.

Couleurs blanches du deuil chinois. Chemises blanches des vieux croyants condamnés. Toges blanches de l'honnêteté et de la pureté des candidats romains. Chaque qualité s'est fondue à sa façon avec les autres dans le manteau-sarape blanc du péon mexicain – pas du tout « formellement » comme on le voit, mais en liaison étroite avec le sens et le sujet.³⁰

Après *Soldadera*, l'épisode dédié au rôle des femmes pendant la guerre civile (1910-1920) que Eisenstein n'eut pas la possibilité de tourner, l'*Épilogue* est situé dans le Mexique contemporain : « le Mexique d'aujourd'hui sur le chemin de la paix, de la prospérité et de la civilisation ».³¹ Suivant un parcours en spirale, le film retourne aux motifs du *Prologue* – l'éternité, la mort – mais sur un plan différent. Les images du *Dia de los Muertos*, le Jour des morts, nous montrent un peuple entier qui célèbre la vie à travers un renversement carnavalesque et dialectique des symboles de la mort. On y voit des têtes de morts (*calaveras*) partout, mais ces crânes sont faits de sucre ou sont des masques décorés portés par de jeunes Mexicains qui expriment à travers la danse leur joie de vivre : « Ainsi le Mexique célèbre-t-il sa victoire et son mépris de la mort pour mieux affirmer sa vitalité ».³²

Conclusion proprement « extatique » du film, l'*Épilogue* insiste pour une dernière fois sur les stratifications que nous avons rencontrées tout au long du film : dans ces plans qui vraisemblablement auraient dû être les derniers du film, apparaissent des masques de têtes de mort en premier plan. Derrière ces masques, on voit de vrais crânes et de vraies squelettes quand il s'agit de masques portés par des figures représentant le Mexique colonial et oppresseur – « effroyables images d'une classe moribonde qui voudrait étouffer ce qui naît et qui vit »³³ – et des visages souriants, dont celui d'un petit garçon sur lequel se termine la version de *Que viva Mexico!* montée par Aleksandrov, qui représentent au contraire le « Mexique véritablement libre »³⁴ du futur. Ce jeu sur les superpositions entre vrais crânes, visages et masques de têtes de mort offre le dernier exemple de stratification et superposition temporelle proposé par le film (figg. 28-29).

Interprété de cette manière, *Que viva Mexico!* se présente donc comme un film qui est en même temps un voyage ethnographique et une fouille, un fouille archéologique horizontale à travers les strates de l'histoire, de la culture, et de la société mexicaines. Eisenstein utilise le cinéma et le dessin comme instruments pour capter et analyser une condition temporelle caractérisée par la coexistence et l'entrelacement de couches historiques différentes. Le montage de *Que viva Mexico!* aurait eu pour but de produire un parcours à travers les strates de cette culture elle-même hybride et, d'une certaine manière, *montée*.

Comme on le verra maintenant, après son retour à Moscou en 1932, Eisenstein approfondira le sens de l'expérience archéologique mexicaine. L'archéologie horizontale expérimentée au Mexique donnera lieu à une archéologie de la conscience et de la culture qui deviendra un des noyaux de la pensée d'Eisenstein dans les années 1930 et 1940. Les traces de cette archéologie sont bien visibles dans *Méthode* et dans les *Notes pour une Histoire générale du cinéma*.

L'héritage mexicain : de l'archéologie de la conscience à l'archéologie du cinéma

Dans un texte intitulé *Les Musées la nuit* faisant partie des *Mémoires*, Eisenstein revient encore une fois sur le voyage mexicain, en se souvenant cette fois d'une visite au musée de Chichén Itzá où étaient conservées les statues des anciennes divinités maya qu'on voit aussi dans le *Prologue*. Lors de cette visite, une panne d'électricité obligea les visiteurs à observer les statues à la lumière intermittente d'allumettes craquées, dans des conditions de visibilité inédites qui eurent l'effet d'une révélation :

Au musée de Chichén Itzá [...] il y eut une panne d'électricité juste comme nous franchissions le seuil du fameux 'département secret' où se conservent sculptées dans la pierre les sensuelles débauches d'imagination des anciens Mayas.

Les statues prenaient quelque chose d'encore plus fantastique, bizarre, démesuré, grandiose du fait qu'elles étaient soudainement sorties ça et là de l'obscurité par la flamme d'une allumette craquée.

Tolstoï dans Enfance, ou bien dans Adolescence, décrit l'effet d'éclairs illuminant par flashes des chevaux au galop. Les flashes étaient si brefs qu'ils ne captaient qu'une phase du mouvement du galop.

Les chevaux paraissaient immobiles.

La soudaine lumière d'une allumette dans la salle peuplée d'immobiles monstres de pierre semblait au contraire leur donner vie.

A cause des changements de perspective, d'éclairage, chaque fois qu'on faisait brûler une allumette, on avait l'impression que pendant les intervalles d'obscurité les monstres de pierre avaient changé de position et de place pour pouvoir diriger d'un autre point de vue leurs yeux de granit, grands ouverts, ronds, exorbités, morts, sur nous qui venions troubler leur repos séculaire. [...] Ombres et lumières se coupaient, se mêlaient, se succédaient. [...]

Toutes sortes de faits tirés de l'histoire des croyances en des dieux, dotés de 'puissance double', se dévidaient inlassablement dans une alternance de lumière et d'obscurité. Et cette alternance commençait à m'apparaître comme un mélange entre la claire raison et les noires profondeurs de la psyché humaine.³⁵

Cette citation mérite d'être approfondie pour deux raisons.

D'un côté, la condition de visibilité intermittente dont parle Eisenstein est une référence claire aux conditions de prise de vue et de projection cinématographique. Les mêmes flashes de lumière qui dans le cas des chevaux au galop décrits par Tolstoï avaient eu un effet qu'on pourrait définir « chronophotographique », de décomposition de la continuité d'un mouvement en instants successifs figés et immobiles, ont dans le cas de la visite au musée de Chichén Itzá un effet opposé, cinématographique plutôt que « chronophotographique ». Ces flashes donnent lieu maintenant à des photogrammes qui, dans leur succession temporelle rapide, produisent chez le spectateur une impression de mouvement, en redonnant de la vie à des statues de pierre qui semblaient à première vue n'être rien d'autre que les ruines inertes d'un passé complètement révolu. Interprété dans cette perspective, ce passage semble résumer en quelques lignes le but poursuivi par Eisenstein avec *Que viva Mexico!* : celui de réactiver, ré-mobiliser à travers le dispositif cinématographique toutes les couches temporelles de la culture mexicaine, à partir des plus profondes, celles qui remontent aux civilisations précolombiennes. Comme Walter Benjamin l'écrira dans un des fragments de son livre sur les *passages*, « l'intermittence est la mesure du rythme cinématographique », un rythme capable de parcourir et analyser l'histoire à travers l'instrument du montage.³⁶

De l'autre côté, ce passage montre clairement que l'un des enjeux du voyage mexicain d'Eisenstein fut la découverte du « mélange entre la claire raison et les noires profondeurs de la psyché humaine ». Ces « noires profondeurs » étaient pour Eisenstein les stratifications profondes de ce qu'il appelle, dans les textes écrits pour le livre *Méthode*, « pensée prélogique » [*dologuitcheskoe* ou *praloguitcheskoe mychlenie*], « sensible » [*tchouvstvennoe*], « diffuse » [*diffuznoe*]. La découverte de cette dimension profonde de la pensée, chronologiquement antérieure par rapport à d'autres stades, et pourtant survivante et toujours active, eut lieu pendant le séjour parisien entre novembre 1929 et mai 1930, avec la fréquentation du cercle réuni autour de Georges Bataille et de la revue *Documents*, où s'entrecroisaient surréalisme, ethnologie et archéologie. Ensuite, la découverte du domaine du « prélogique » se poursuivit à Hollywood et puis au Mexique, à travers la lecture de livres comme *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (1910) et *La Mentalité primitive* (1922) de Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Le Rameau d'or* (1906-1915) de James Frazer et les *Elemente der Völkerpsychologie* (1900) de Wilhelm Wundt. Au Mexique, comme nous lisons dans un chapitre de *Méthode* intitulé *Le Mouvement de la pensée*

(1943), toutes ces lectures furent enrichies par la rencontre directe avec des traces de cette « pensée prélogique » et « sensible » :

De jour en jour je parviens à connaître plus en détail l'ordonnance merveilleuse de la pensée prélogique, sensible : non seulement à travers les études anthropologiques, mais aussi grâce au contact direct avec les descendants des Aztèques et des Toltèques, des Maya et des Huichols, qui ont été capables de préserver à travers les siècles, sans les détruire, les méandres de la pensée qui ont produit les traits stupéfiants de ce miracle que sont les cultures primitives du Mexique, où il y a des tribus qui se trouvent à côté du berceau d'un âge de la culture qui pour elles n'a pas encore commencé.³⁷

Une fois retourné à Moscou en 1932, l'exploration de ces stratifications profondes de la pensée individuelle et collective – selon la perspective d'un modèle épistémologique qui revient constamment dans les écrits d'Eisenstein des années 1930 et 1940, le *parallélisme entre ontogenèse et phylogenèse* – sera développée dans le cadre du vaste projet du livre *Méthode*, dont la première et seule présentation publique sera la conférence intitulée *La Forme du film : nouveaux problèmes* prononcée en janvier 1935 au Premier congrès pansoviétique des créateurs de films. Dans le texte de sa conférence Eisenstein fournit plusieurs exemples de la manière dont cette « pensée prélogique » et « sensible » – avec ses symboles et ses structures, fondées sur ce que Lévy-Bruhl appelait « loi de participation » et sur le principe de la « *pars pro toto* », qui affirme l'équivalence de la partie et du tout – peut être interprétée comme une source féconde pour la construction de formes artistiques efficaces. Après avoir exposé toute une série de parallélismes entre procédés artistiques et exemples de « pensée prélogique » tirés de la psychologie et de l'ethnologie qui vont des structures du « discours intérieur » étudiées par Vygotski aux effets des maladies cérébrales observés par Luria, des rituels qui accompagnent l'accouchement des femmes en Polynésie aux croyances des Indiens brésiliens Bororo, du langage des aborigènes australiens à celui des Klamaths américains, Eisenstein arrive à formuler la thèse selon laquelle toute œuvre d'art qui veut être vraiment efficace doit puiser dans la réserve de la « pensée prélogique », « sensible » et « émotionnelle », pour mettre ses structures au service d'une forme bien ancrée dans le présent, orientée vers une finalité politique bien définie, et centrée sur un thème logiquement construit. Il ne s'agit donc pas d'opérer une simple « régression » vers le passé, le primitif et l'archaïque. Ce que Eisenstein présente dans sa conférence est donc un double mouvement dialectique vers le bas et vers le haut, un double mouvement de « plongée » et d'« ascension » capable de traverser toutes les stratifications temporelles, logiques et prélogiques, de la conscience et de la culture :

La dialectique de l'œuvre d'art est bâtie sur la plus curieuse des « dyades ». L'effet [vozdeïstvie] de l'œuvre d'art repose sur le fait qu'un double processus se déroule en elle simultanément : un élan progressif ascendant en direction des idées au plus haut degré de la conscience – et simultanément, au moyen de la structure formelle, une plongée dans les couches les plus profondes de la pensée sensorielle [tchouvstvvennoe mychlenie]. Les pôles opposés de ces deux courants créent la tension remarquable de l'unité de la forme et du contenu qui caractérise les œuvres d'art authentiques. Toutes la possèdent.³⁸

La vision de la conscience et de la culture qui est à la base de ce passage est directement dérivée de l'expérience mexicaine. La possibilité d'opérer un « glissement continu de niveau à niveau – en avant et en arrière ; ici, vers les formes les plus hautes de l'ordre intellectuel ; là, vers les formes primitives de la pensée sensorielle », ³⁹ se fonde sur le présupposé que ces formes sont toujours actives et accessibles. La condition de *mnogoukladnost'* – la coexistence simultanée de plusieurs niveaux de développement socio-économique – que Eisenstein avait rencontré en Russie lors du tournage de *La Ligne générale* se traduit dans les années qui suivent le voyage mexicain en une condition de *mnogoukladnost'* psychique et culturelle. ⁴⁰ Eisenstein parle d'une « coexistence simul-

tanée, en diverses proportions, des différents types et stades », ⁴¹ et souligne combien « la marge entre ces formes est on ne peut plus mobile et [...] fluide », ⁴² tant au niveau de la conscience individuelle, toujours prête à « réagir soudain d'après l'arsenal intime, toujours en éveil, de la pensée sensorielle avec toutes les normes de conduite qui en dérivent », ⁴³ qu'au niveau de la culture, où « les formes de la pensée sensorielle prélogique – qui, chez les peuples ayant atteint un niveau convenable de développement social et culturel subsistent sous forme du discours intérieur –, représentent en même temps, pour une humanité encore à l'aube de son évolution culturelle, les normes de conduite générales ». ⁴⁴

Cette vision stratifiée de la conscience et de la culture informe pleinement l'œuvre artistique et théorique d'Eisenstein dans les années 1930 et 1940.

Dans un autre chapitre de *Méthode* intitulé *La Perception diffuse*, Eisenstein affirme qu'à la base de tout matériau artistique « saisissant », il y a toujours « le conflit », « l'écart [*sdivig*] entre deux strates de la conscience ». ⁴⁵ La plupart des films et des projets de film auxquels Eisenstein travaille dans les années 1930 et 1940 sont en effet pensés en termes d'« écarts » entre époques différentes. Ces « écarts » peuvent prendre la forme des grands fresques historiques qu'on trouve dans des projets de film non réalisés comme *Moscou dans le temps* (1933), *Le Grand canal de Fergana* (1939) ou *Moscou 800* (1947), ou plutôt celle de la densité de références historiques et artistiques qu'on trouve dans des films comme *Le Père de Béjine* (1935-37), *Alexandre Nevsky* (1938), ou *Ivan le Terrible* (1941-46).

À la fin de sa vie, dans ces années 1946-48 que Eisenstein considérait comme un « post-scriptum » à sa biographie après le grave infarctus qui l'avait frappé en février 1946, Eisenstein reprendra cette même vision archéologique de la conscience et de la culture pour réfléchir sur sa position d'historien face au projet d'écrire une « histoire générale du cinéma » dont il avait été chargé par l'Institut d'Histoire de l'Art de l'Académie des Sciences de l'URSS. Dans une note rédigée dans ses cahiers le 30 juin 1947, nous retrouvons encore une fois cette vision de la conscience en termes de « strates », de « layers » que l'historien doit traverser, tout comme l'artiste, même si la vitesse de cette traversée varie dans les deux cas :

La différence avec le travail créatif au sens strict réside dans le fait que tandis que dans le travail créatif il y a un contact avec les lowest layers [les couches les plus profondes] de la conscience in a spark [dans une étincelle] d'inspiration, dans le travail sur l'histoire du cinéma, as I planned it [comme je l'ai conçu], la chaîne entière des phases consécutives se déploie from today backwards [d'aujourd'hui en arrière], vers ces mêmes phases : et devant nous il n'y a pas une image [obraz] in a flash [en un éclair], mais la chair de poule causée par le fait de contempler et de vivre ce flash in slow motion through centuries of evolution [cet éclair au ralenti à travers des siècles d'évolution]. ⁴⁶

Le résultat de cette contemplation *in slow motion* des « layers » et des « phases consécutives » de l'histoire de la conscience et de la culture sera le vaste projet inachevé que nous connaissons aujourd'hui à travers les *Notes pour une Histoire générale du cinéma*. Un vaste projet archéologique qui cherche à reconstruire les lignes généalogiques qui relient le cinéma – dans toutes ses formes, y inclus les possibles développements futurs – à l'histoire des arts, des pratiques funéraires et des rites religieux : de la représentation des anges qui chantent dans le Retable de *L'Adoration de l'Agneau mystique* de Jan Van Eyck à la question du montage audiovisuel, des momies égyptiennes et des masques funéraires romains aux « ciné-chroniques » produites par le cinéma soviétique des années 1920, des vitraux colorés des cathédrales gothiques au cinéma stéréoscopique, « de Dionysos à la télévision ». ⁴⁷ Ce vaste projet archéologique, qui considère le cinéma comme « héritier » et « synthèse » de toute une histoire séculaire de formes artistiques et rituelles qui sont « organiquement et intégralement incluses » ou « contenues » en lui, comme s'il s'agissait de stratifications qui lui confèrent une densité historique, est le fruit ultime de cette expérience archéologique que fut le voyage mexicain.

De l'archéologie de l'âme à l'archéologie de la culture : le paradigme archéologique chez Freud et Benjamin

Le présupposé sur lequel se fonde la vision du « travail créatif » et du « travail sur l'histoire » que Eisenstein présente dans *Méthode* et dans les *Notes pour une Histoire générale du cinéma* est l'idée que toutes les stratifications de la conscience et de la culture survivent, coexistent, et peuvent être saisies et réactivées à travers des formes de régression bien ciblée. Dans le chapitre de *Méthode* intitulé *La Perception diffuse*, Eisenstein écrit que « la particularité de notre structure psychologique réside dans le fait que nous vivons en faisant recours contemporanément à toutes les strates, chacune dirigeant un domaine spécifique d'activité, des 'automatismes involontaires' qui ne sont pas régis par la conscience, jusqu'aux manifestations les plus élevées de la conscience et de la volonté ». ⁴⁸ Chaque individu, même sans en être conscient, « se souvient » ⁴⁹ de tous les « strates » et les « stades » que chaque conscience individuelle et chaque culture a tôt ou tard parcourus, et peut y revenir à travers un chemin de régression à partir du présent : « notre conscience oscille sans cesse d'un point à l'autre, et est capable à chaque instant de faire un parcours d'aller et retour entre ces stades fondamentaux ». ⁵⁰

En 1929, un an avant l'arrivée d'Eisenstein au Mexique, le phénomène de la « conservation dans le psychique » [*die Erhaltung im Psychischen*] – à savoir que, « dans la vie d'âme », on observe une « conservation du primitif [*Erhaltung des Primitiven*] à côté de ce qui en provient par transformation » qui fait ainsi que « rien de ce qui fut une fois formé ne peut disparaître, que tout se trouve conservé d'une façon ou d'une autre et peut, dans des circonstances appropriées, par exemple par une régression allant suffisamment loin, être ramené au jour » ⁵¹ – est analysé par Freud dans *Le malaise dans la culture* à travers une célèbre référence archéologique qui peut être mise en relation avec l'interprétation stratigraphique de la culture mexicaine proposée par Eisenstein. À la place des stratifications temporelles que Eisenstein avait découvertes, les unes à côté des autres, à Mexico, Chichén Itzá, Tehuantepec, Cholula, Tetlapayac et Oaxaca, nous trouvons dans le texte de Freud l'« hypothèse fantastique » d'une Rome dans laquelle les bâtiments et les monuments érigés aux diverses époques de son histoire ne se superposent ni se remplacent les uns les autres, mais plutôt s'interpénètrent et *coexistent* intacts dans le même espace :

Faisons l'hypothèse fantastique que Rome n'est pas un lieu d'habitations humaines, mais un être psychique, qui a un passé pareillement long et riche en substance et dans lequel donc rien de ce qui s'est une fois produit n'a disparu, dans lequel, à côté de la dernière phase de développement, subsistent encore également toutes les phases antérieures. Cela signifierait donc pour Rome que sur le Palatin les palais impériaux et le Septizonium de Septime Sévère s'élèvent encore à leur hauteur ancienne, que le château Saint-Ange porte encore sur ses créneaux les belles statues dont il était orné jusqu'au siège des Goths, etc. Mais davantage encore : à l'emplacement du Palazzo Caffarelli se dresserait de nouveau, sans qu'on ait besoin de raser cet édifice, le temple de Jupiter Capitolin et celui-ci d'ailleurs, pas seulement sous sa figure dernière, comme le voyaient les Romains de la période impériale, mais aussi sous sa toute première figure, alors qu'il offrait encore des formes étrusques et était paré d'antéfixes en terre cuite. Là où maintenant se dresse le Colisée, nous pourrions admirer aussi la Domus aurea de Néron, qui a disparu ; sur la place du Panthéon nous ne trouverions pas seulement le Panthéon actuel, tel qu'il nous fut légué par Hadrien, mais aussi sur le même terrain la construction originelle de M. Agrippa ; bien plus, le même sol porterait l'église Maria sopra Minerva et l'ancien temple par-dessus lequel elle est construite. Et alors, il suffirait peut-être à l'observateur de changer la direction de son regard ou la place qu'il occupe pour faire surgir l'une ou l'autre de ces vues. ⁵²

Dans les pages qui suivent ce passage, Freud souligne toutes les limites de cette comparaison : il s'agirait d'une « fantaisie » qui conduit « à de l'irreprésentable, voire à de l'absurde », vu que « un seul et même espace ne supporte pas d'être rempli de deux façons », et que la vie d'une ville est faite de « démolitions et remplace-

ments de bâtiments », tandis que « l'hypothèse de la conservation de tout ce qui est passé ne vaut, pour la vie d'âme, qu'à la condition que l'organe de la psyché soit demeuré intact ». ⁵³ Cependant, la place centrale que cette comparaison occupe dans la première section de *Malaise dans la culture* montre bien l'importance que Freud lui attribuait afin de présenter la thèse selon laquelle « dans la vie d'âme la conservation de ce qui est passé [*die Erhaltung des Vergangenen*] est la règle plutôt qu'une déconcertante exception ». ⁵⁴ Ce que le Mexique sera pour Eisenstein en 1930-1932, Rome l'est pour Freud en 1929 : un vaste site archéologique capable de nous aider à penser la survivance du passé et la simultanéité entre passé et présent.

Comme il a été observé, les références archéologiques jouent dans les textes de Freud un rôle proprement *constitutif* et pas seulement illustratif et métaphorique. ⁵⁵ Lecteur assidu de textes archéologiques (Heinrich Schliemann, John Evans, Howard Carter), ami depuis l'enfance de l'archéologue Emanuel Löwy (qui, dans sa conférence de 1891 *Sullo studio dell'archeologia*, avait souligné l'importance d'étudier de manière scientifique les « strates de civilisations diverses [...] qu'on pouvait repérer dans un même lieu » ⁵⁶), collectionneur de pièces archéologiques qu'il gardait bien visibles dans son cabinet au numéro 19 de la Berggasse à Vienne, Freud élabore une vision de la psychanalyse comme « archéologie de l'âme » et comme fouille dans un appareil psychique conçu en termes topographiques et stratigraphiques dont on trouve les premières traces dès 1896, dans le texte de la conférence intitulée *L'Étiologie de l'hystérie*. Ici, Freud compare l'attitude du médecin qui cherche les causes de l'hystérie dans la vie psychique passée des patients à celle d'un archéologue capable de comprendre que « *saxa loquuntur* », que les « pierres » [*saxa*] du passé « parlent » [*loquuntur*] à celui qui sait les écouter :

Supposez qu'un chercheur en voyage arrive dans une région peu connue dans laquelle un champ de ruines avec des restes de murs, des fragments de colonnes, de tablettes aux signes graphiques effacés et illisibles, éveillerait son intérêt. Il peut se contenter de regarder ce qui est étalé en plein jour, puis de questionner les habitants, peut-être à demi barbares, demeurant dans les environs, sur ce que la tradition leur a fait savoir de l'histoire et de la signification de ces restes monumentaux, de consigner leurs informations et de continuer son voyage. Mais il peut aussi procéder autrement ; il peut avoir apporté avec lui pioches, pelles et bêches, il peut décider les habitants à travailler avec ces outils, s'attaquer avec eux au champ de ruines, déblayer les gravois et à partir des restes visibles mettre à découvert ce qui est enfoui. Si le succès récompense son travail, les trouvailles se commentent d'elles-mêmes ; les restes de murs appartiennent à l'enceinte d'un palais ou d'une trésorerie, à partir des ruines de colonnes un temple se complète, les inscriptions trouvées en grand nombre, bilingues dans les cas heureux, dévoilent un alphabet et une langue, et le déchiffrement et la traduction de ceux-ci donnent des renseignements insoupçonnés sur les événements des premiers âges, à la mémoire desquels ces monuments ont été édifiés. Saxa loquuntur! ⁵⁷

En 1932, l'année où Eisenstein revient du Mexique à Moscou, une référence archéologique semblable à celle que nous trouvons dans *L'Étiologie de l'hystérie* paraît dans un texte bref de Walter Benjamin intitulé *Fouille et souvenir* [*Ausgraben und Erinnern*], un texte faisant partie de la série des *Denkbilder*, « images de pensée ». Benjamin, qui avait visité Pompéï en 1925 et qui avait tenu en 1931 une conférence radiophonique pour enfants intitulée *La Chute d'Herculanum et de Pompéï*, ⁵⁸ dans laquelle il avait expliqué en détails les modalités de préservation des ruines et d'extraction du terrain des calques des corps, présente dans *Fouille et souvenir* une vision de la mémoire comme « médium du vécu » [*Medium des Erlebten*], un « médium » dans le sens spatial d'un *milieu* matériel qui comme le terrain peut devenir l'objet d'une fouille archéologique :

La langue a signifié sans malentendu possible que la mémoire n'est pas un instrument pour l'exploration du passé, mais plutôt son médium [Medium]. C'est le médium du vécu [das Medium des Erlebten] comme le terrain est le médium

[Medium] où sont ensevelies les anciennes villes. Qui tente de s'approcher de son propre passé enseveli doit faire comme un homme qui fouille. Il ne doit surtout pas craindre de revenir sans cesse à un seul et même état de choses – à le disperser comme on disperse de la terre, à le retourner comme on retourne le terrain. Car les « états de choses » ne sont rien de plus que des couches qui ne livrent qu'après une exploration méticuleuse ce qui justifie ces fouilles. C'est-à-dire les images, qui, arrachées à tout contexte antérieur, sont pour notre regard ultérieur des bijoux en habits sobres – comme des torsis dans la galerie du collectionneur. Et il est à coup sûr utile, lors de fouilles, de procéder selon des plans. Mais tout aussi indispensable est le coup de bêche précautionneux et tâtonnant dans le terrain. Et il se frustre du meilleur, celui qui fait seulement l'inventaire des objets mis au jour et n'est pas capable de montrer dans le sol actuel l'endroit où l'ancien était conservé. Ainsi les véritables souvenirs doivent-ils moins procéder du rapport que désigner exactement l'endroit où le chercheur a mis la main sur eux. Au sens le plus strict, le véritable souvenir doit donc, sur un mode épique et rhapsodique, donner en même temps une image de celui qui se souvient, de même qu'un bon rapport archéologique ne doit pas seulement indiquer les couches d'où proviennent les découvertes mais aussi et surtout celles qu'il a fallu traverser auparavant.

Les produits de cette approche archéologique au passé dans l'œuvre de Benjamin seront d'un côté les fouilles autobiographiques que nous trouvons dans *Chronique berlinoise* (1932) et dans *Enfance berlinoise vers 1900* (1932-34, 1938), et de l'autre la vaste fouille du *Passagen-Werk* : le projet de livre sur « Paris capitale du XIX^e siècle » qui se propose comme une vraie « archéologie de la culture » de la modernité ayant pour but d'étudier la « préhistoire [Urgeschichte] du XIX^e siècle »⁵⁹ en termes topographiques et stratigraphiques.

Rome, Chichén Itzá, Pompeï. Le « tournant archéologique » que nous proposons de repérer dans l'œuvre d'Eisenstein – la vision stratigraphique de la conscience, de la culture, de l'œuvre d'art et du médium cinématographique que Eisenstein élabore à la suite du voyage mexicain – se situe dans le contexte de ces autres tentatives de repenser le statut et les objets de l'archéologie classique afin d'élaborer un modèle épistémologique, herméneutique et historiographique qui du domaine des études sur les restes matériels des civilisations anciennes peut être élargi aux domaines de la vie psychique, de l'histoire de la culture, de la théorie de l'art et du cinéma.

Illustrations

18-22. Photogrammes de *Que viva Mexico!*

23. Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Sans titre*, 1931 (Moscou, Archive d'État pour la Littérature et les Arts, RGALI).

24-29. Photogrammes de *Que viva Mexico!*

Notes

¹ David Bordwell, « Eisenstein's Epistemological Shift », dans *Screen*, vol. 15, n° 4, 1974, pp. 29-46. L'auteur reprend et développe son interprétation de l'évolution de la pensée d'Eisenstein dans *The Cinema of Eisenstein*, Routledge, New York-London 2005. Voir aussi Oksana Bulgakowa, *The Evolving Eisenstein. Three Theoretical Constructs of Sergei Eisenstein*, dans Al Lavalley, Barry P. Scherr (sous la direction de), *Eisenstein at 100. A Reconsideration*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ 2001, pp. 38-51.

² David Bordwell, « Eisenstein's Epistemological Shift », cit., p. 33.

³ *Idem*, p. 44.

⁴ Le livre inachevé *Méthode* a été publié en deux éditions différentes en russe : *Metod*, éd. par Naum Kleiman, Muzej kino - Ejzenštejn centr, Moskva 2002 (2 vol.) et *Metod / Die Methode*, éd. par Oksana Bulgakowa, Potemkin Press, Berlin-San Francisco 2008 (4 vol.).

⁵ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Notes pour une Histoire générale du cinéma*, édition établie par Naum Kleiman et Antonio Somaini, traduction du russe de Catherine Perrel, notes et commentaires de François Albera, Noam Kleiman, Catherine Perrel, Antonio Somaini, introduction de Noam Kleiman, suivi de deux essais de François Albera et Antonio Somaini, Éditions de l'Association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma, Paris 2013.

⁶ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *La Forme du film : nouveaux problèmes* (1935), dans Armand Panigel, Christian Bourgois (sous la direction de), *Le Film : sa forme son sens*, Edition Christian Bourgois, Paris 1976, p. 162.

⁷ Cf. Antonio Somaini, *Cinema as 'dynamic mummification', history as montage. Eisenstein's media archaeology*, dans Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Notes for a General History of Cinema*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2015 [à paraître].

⁸ Sergej M. Eisenstein, note de cahier datée 30 juin 1947, publiée dans *Notes pour une Histoire générale du cinéma*, cit., p. 243.

⁹ Cf. Knut Ebeling, *Wilde Archäologien. Theorien materieller Kultur von Kant bis Kittler*, Kadmos, Berlin 2012, en particulier l'Exposé 1 (« Sigmund Freud : Archäologie der Seele 1896-1937 »), pp. 254-361, et l'Exposé 2 (« Walter Benjamin : Archäologie der Moderne 1928-1939 »), pp. 362-511.

¹⁰ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Towards a Theory of Montage*, éd. par Richard Taylor, Michael Glenny, I.B. Tauris, British film institute, London-New York 2010, p. 43 (texte original en russe dans Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Montaž*, éd. par N. Kleiman, Muzej kino - Ejzenštejn centr, Moskva 2000, pp. 91-92).

¹¹ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Commentaire sur le Grand Canal de Fergana*, cité par Noam Kleiman, *Il tempio messicano di Ejzenštejn*, dans Camillo Bassotto, Stefano Cavagnis (sous la direction de), *Que viva Mexico !*, Cineforum italiano, Mestre 1999, p. 30 (texte original russe dans Ilja Weissfeld (sous la direction de), *Voprosy kinodramaturgii*, Iskustvo, Moskva 1959, pp. 327-353).

¹² Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Diffuznoe vospriiatie*, dans *Metod*, cit., vol. I, p. 318.

¹³ Id., *L'Unité*, dans *Mémoires*, vol. 1, trad. Jacques Aumont, Union Générale d'editions, Paris 1978, p. 300.

¹⁴ Id., « Les Cinq époques », dans *Pravda*, 6 juin 1926. Traduction italienne *Le cinque epoche (a proposito della realizzazione del film La linea generale)*, dans Francesco Pitassio (sous la direction de), *La forma della memoria. Memorialistica, estetica, cinema nell'opera di Sergej Ejzenštejn*, Forum, Udine 2009, pp. 193-200.

¹⁵ *Idem*, p. 193.

¹⁶ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *La Non-indifférente nature*, vol. 1, trad. Luda et Jean Schnitzer, préface de Pascal Bonitzer, Union générale d'éditions, Paris 1976, pp. 103-140.

¹⁷ Phrase qui paraît dans la séquence d'ouverture du film.

¹⁸ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Les Cinq époques*, cit., p. 195.

¹⁹ Vladimir Ilitch Lénine, *Sur l'infantilisme 'de gauche' et les idées petites-bourgeoises* (1918), dans *Œuvres*, t. XXVII (février-juillet 1918), accessible en ligne à l'adresse suivante : www.marxists.org/francais/lenin/works/1918/05/vil19180505.htm

²⁰ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Les Cinq époques*, cit., p. 196.

Que viva Mexico! et le tournant archéologique dans l'œuvre d'Eisenstein

- ²¹ Id., *Scénario de Que viva Mexico!*, dans *Les Écrits mexicains de S.M. Eisenstein*, textes réunis et présentés par Steven Bernas, L'Harmattan, Paris 2001, p. 90.
- ²² Cf. Masha Salazkina, *In Excess. Sergei Eisenstein's Mexico*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 2009, ch. 2 (« Sandunga »), pp. 54-89.
- ²³ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Scénario de Que viva Mexico!*, cit., p. 92.
- ²⁴ *Idem*, p. 108.
- ²⁵ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Avtor i ego tema*, dans *Metod*, vol. I, p. 242 (cité dans Masha Salazkina, *In Excess*, cit., p. 92).
- ²⁶ *Idem*, p. 234 (cité dans Masha Salazkina, *In Excess*, cit., p. 94).
- ²⁷ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Les Kangourous*, dans *La Non-indifférente nature*, vol. 1, cit., pp. 415-416.
- ²⁸ Id., *Scénario de Que viva Mexico!*, cit., p. 102.
- ²⁹ Cf. Marie Seton, *Eisenstein* [1952], trad. Louis Lanoix et Jean Queval, Paris, Seuil, Paris 1957, pp. 212-213. Cf. aussi Masha Salazkina, *In Excess*, cit., pp. 118-119.
- ³⁰ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Torito* [1934], dans *Mémoires*, vol. 3, trad. Claude Ibrahimoff et Jacques Aumont, Union générale d'éditions, Paris 1985, pp. 68-69.
- ³¹ Id., *Scénario de Que viva Mexico!*, cit., p. 122.
- ³² Id., *Le Jour des morts, une attitude ironique envers la mort* (1937), dans *Les Écrits mexicains de S.M. Eisenstein*, cit., p. 158.
- ³³ Id., *Scénario de Que viva Mexico!*, cit., p. 144.
- ³⁴ *Ibidem*.
- ³⁵ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Les Musées la nuit*, dans *Les Écrits mexicains de S.M. Eisenstein*, cit., pp. 169-170.
- ³⁶ Walter Benjamin, *Paris, capitale du XIX^e siècle. Le Livre des passages*, Cerf, Paris 1993, fragment G° 19, p. 840.
- ³⁷ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Dviženie myšlenija*, dans *Metod*, vol. I, p. 91.
- ³⁸ Id., *La Forme du film : nouveaux problèmes*, dans *Le Film : sa forme, son sens*, cit., p. 162 (trad. modifiée par nous).
- ³⁹ *Idem*, p. 161.
- ⁴⁰ Naum Kleiman, *Nota a Le cinque epoche*, dans Francesco Pitassio (sous la direction de), *La forma della memoria*, cit., p. 213.
- ⁴¹ *Idem*, p. 162.
- ⁴² *Idem*, p. 161.
- ⁴³ *Ibidem*.
- ⁴⁴ *Idem*, p. 150.
- ⁴⁵ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Diffuznoe vosprijatie*, dans *Metod*, vol. I, p. 316.
- ⁴⁶ La note est citée dans Antonio Somaini, *Généalogie, morphologie, anthropologie des images, archéologie des médias*, dans Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Notes pour une Histoire générale du cinéma*, cit., pp. 243-244.
- ⁴⁷ *Idem*, p. 85.
- ⁴⁸ Sergej M. Eisenstein, *Diffuznoe vosprijatie*, dans *Metod*, vol. I, p. 323.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.
- ⁵⁰ *Idem*, p. 324.
- ⁵¹ Sigmund Freud, *Malaise dans la culture* (1929), trad. par Pierre Cotet, René Lainé et Johanna Stute-Cadiot, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 2004, p. 10.

⁵² *Idem*, pp. 11-12. Sur ce passage cf. aussi Philippe Dubois, *L'Acte photographique et autres essais*, Nathan, Paris 1990, pp. 261-283.

⁵³ *Idem*, pp. 12-13.

⁵⁴ *Idem*, p. 13.

⁵⁵ Cf. Knut Ebeling, *Wilde Archäologien*, cit., pp. 254-361. Pour Ebeling, l'archéologie fut pour Freud « das fundamentale Modell, auf dem die gesamte Theorie aufbaute » (p. 298).

⁵⁶ Emanuel Löwy, *Sullo studio dell'archeologia*, dans *Rassegna nazionale*, Firenze, 1891, cit. dans Knut Ebeling, *Wilde Archäologien*, cit., p. 347.

⁵⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Sur l'étiologie de l'hystérie* (1896), dans André Bourguignon et Pierre Cotet (sous la direction de) *Œuvres complètes*, vol. III (1894-1899), Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1989, p. 150.

⁵⁸ Walter Benjamin, *Untergang von Herculaneum und Pompeji* (1931), dans Rolf Tiedemann et Hermann Schweppenhäuser (sous la direction de), *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. VII, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 1989, pp. 214-220 (trad. fr. dans *Lumières pour enfants*, trad. Sylvie Muller, Christian Bourgois, Paris 1988, pp. 217-225).

⁵⁹ Walter Benjamin, *Paris, capitale du XIX^e siècle*, cit., fragment C 2a, 11, p. 113.

Published weekly, except during the months of December and January, when it is published bi-weekly. The subscription price is \$5.00 per annum in advance. Single copies are sold at 15 cents. The subscription price for libraries and institutions is \$10.00 per annum in advance. The subscription price for foreign countries is \$12.00 per annum in advance. The subscription price for the year 1917 is \$5.00 in advance.

Published by the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill. 60610. Entered as second-class matter, May 2, 1912, under post office number 384,000, at Chicago, Ill., under special agreement of post office and postmaster. Accepted for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on July 1, 1918.

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Intermediality, Media-Archaeology, and the Gallery. Notes on Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi's Video Installations

The work by Angela Ricci Lucchi and Yervant Gianikian is widely renown for a specific attention for the detail in the treatment of the reel, and an almost sacral attitude to an exquisitely traditional, analogue idea of cinema, conceived both as a privileged access to History, and a technique involving the medium in its materiality. History and materiality are two important terms that identify the two exploration paths I will follow in the next pages, trying to understand whether they develop parallel research lines or they cross each other – and, if it is the case, where and how this encounter takes place.

At the same time, History and materiality represent the main features of a two-fold idea of cinema I would attribute to the authors, since their works are able to open the doors of the past and at the same time to render the tangibility of its image.

Whereas internationally assessed as avant-garde directors, the couple refuses any attempt to label themselves in a specific category, highlighting the ethical dimension intertwined with the work on History and its filmic materiality. This is a crucial point, made several times by the Gianikians', including the interview I had the chance to conduct two years ago. Explicitly asked to define themselves, Gianikian answered:

We received many labels that we feel too tight. We have been defined as archaeologists, entomologists, etc. But we refuse these labels. Our work is a fluid intervention that, if anything, might evoke an ethical dimension. Images are for us something contemporary; present is what exists for us, even though we clearly work on the past.¹

The ethical issue is obviously exemplified by the re-presentation of strong themes – colonialism and war, among others – which are displayed in their brutality. Yervant Gianikian continued: “[nowadays] war is told and showed in an abstract way, it is more and more refined [...] while our work intends to disclose its violence.”² Angela Ricci Lucchi stressed the same aspect during another video-interview, in which she complained about the way of “being contemporary” adopted by the broad artistic circuit:

We wondered why the contemporary art we saw was not concerned with these problems: for us it was something of primary importance; that is, together with the aesthetic aspect, for us the ethical element was paramount; it was vital. We realized that a great part of contemporary art was not at all concerned with that. We therefore thought that being contemporary means denying this ethical urge.³

What Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi do in their work is thus to challenge contemporary art, operating both in the domain of moving images, and at the intersection between cinema and visual arts, in order to provide a possible answer to the ethical urge that, provocatively enough, they say is left unanswered by their coeval. In this sense, though disregarding their preference not to be labeled they can be described as *media artists*,⁴ since their relationship towards technology, their engagement and attitude towards the image are not just committed to cinema, but rather to painting, drawing and – if we look back in the past – to mixed media. Within such a wide frame they seem to pay a specific attention to the relationships between old and new elements, which recur in different forms and according to diverse temporal patterns as *topoi*. According to the media archaeological perspective proposed by Huhtamo,⁵ these are formulas that are informed and re-informed over time establishing particular points of dis-/continuity.

Therefore, the authors' refusal of any label is not to be seen as an intellectual stance, on the contrary it is a honest and unpretentious way to question their own work in both aesthetical and ethical terms, a stance that shows a deep attention to a certain idea of *media-history*,⁶ and the rupture potential of the work by the two filmmakers: it is a way to express their creativity by moving across the borders of film and its history.

This is something typical of the authors' production from the very beginning of their artistic research. Starting from an architectural and a painting background, their cinematographic adventure as a couple started in the Seventies with scented films. Conceived to be screened in loop and in association with "the diffusion of odors and perfumes" such as burnt essences, those films contributed to a research "defined according to contexts, environment, surroundings, performance,"⁷ where the presence of the artist was not simply requested, but played a crucial role. Sometimes the event encompassed multiple simultaneous screenings, using thus more perfumes at the same time. In this frame, the public was free to move from one room to another, living what can actually be defined as a true synesthetic experience. Such extraordinary work represented the first attempt to expand the cinematic *dispositif* towards a broad *ensemble* of expressive languages, later pursued by Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi during their whole career.

Paying a constant attention for the universe of visual arts intended as an experimental terrain, the cinematographic productions of the couple often manipulate the filmic image proposed in the movies: their artworks consist in a re-presentation – meaning both a representation and a new presentation – of the same footage we see in their films after a reshape operation that reframes them in terms of temporality, contextualization, and coloring. It is not a coincidence, then, if they belong to that group of filmmakers⁸ whose visual, artistic and historical explorations encompass works that have been purposely conceived for the gallery.

A consistent selection of these works was exhibited for the first time in 2012 at Hangar Bicocca in Milan. The initiative was titled *NON NON NON*, making explicit the polemical position of the artists towards contemporary art I already mentioned. What follows is an analysis of the exhibited works articulated after the two key-concepts History and materiality. Central questions in this examination are: do they represent a mere integration to the artists' cinematographic work *stricto sensu*? Or, on the contrary, do they foster a different kind of continuity? Do they enhance the visual system and the encyclopedia produced by the Gianikians' contribution *tout court*, whether cinematographic or not? Is such continuity to be interpreted in a linear perspective or is it rather a discontinuity? The installations are based on moving images, exhibited cinema,⁹ gallery short films: are the forms of gaze they promote typical of cinema or do they refer to a museological scheme? How do these video-

installation materialize the movement beyond/outside film history by means of a different use of moving image? The curators at Hangar Bicocca designed three main areas where installations are presented in very diverse ways. A temporary pavilion closed by a curtain opens the exhibition, which continues with a long central nave starting from the pavilion exit and leading to a big square room at the end of the itinerary. The first area gathers on one side a selection of watercolors by Angela Ricci Lucchi dating from the 1970s till now, while on the other side a smaller room is carved to host the single-channel video installation *Carroussel de Jeux* (2005). The long, dark, high nave is dominated by *La Marcia dell'uomo* (2001) (fig. 30), a three-screen installation conceived for the 2001 Venice Biennale. After having covered the long nave, a wide space leaves the visitor free to move throughout the dark openness of the gallery, and at a certain point the walking trajectories end up in the last area – the cube (fig. 31). This is a huge room, where five installations basically fill the three walls visible from the entranceway. Despite the big dimensions of the space, the impression is to be closed inside a massive box. Completely opposed to the navigability sensation produced by the nave, this last area with its grey concrete walls and floor, its high ceiling, and the perfect symmetry of the screens placed to be observed from a central perspective position, absorbs the attention of the public as well as its movement. The images gathered in the cube belong to five simultaneous single-channel installations screened in loop. The strong colors and emotive impact of the artworks exhibited in this area stop the visitor and almost hypnotize him, offering a series of “electric shocks” produced by the view of *Electric fragments* (two excerpts, respectively 2002-2004), *Visions du desert* (2000), *Topographies* (2007), and *Terre Nullius* (2002).

The authors collaborated side by side with the gallery staff in the design of this set-up, which mirrors their need to reframe some sequences taken from their films as parts of video installations. The choices of big screens, monumental mural projections on the one hand, and more intimate screenings on the other, as well as the coupling of dark and well-lighted areas exemplify the contamination between white cube and black box, and emphasize the idea of freeing the moving image from the format, the duration, the dimension constraints of the classical film.¹⁰ A direct dialogue between cinematic element and watercolors is opened up, giving birth to a series of installations that allow the authors to trace visual and narrative itineraries able to overcome the separations among the single artworks and their material support.¹¹

This fact highlights at least two trajectories that are to be found in the filmmakers work: a representational vector, and a formal one, corresponding to the space and the content on/off screen.

Representation and ethical strategies on screen: media-archaeology and History

If we consider the content of the representation, it is extremely easy to recognize a direct continuity between the installations and the war films, the ones dealing with neo-colonialism, and the autobiographic filmic diaries released with found footage or home movies, such as those showing the Armenian diaspora. Such continuity is not the only retrievable one in the gallery space: on the contrary, the visitor is presented a wide range of paintings that crystallize the very images he sees on screen (figg. 32-33) drawing an immediate connection among them, and disclosing what are two subsequent working phases in the authors' creative process. As Gianikian explained, “the drawings work as diagrams summarizing functions, motifs and particular elements recurring in the films,”¹² they are a sort of storyboard – as in the case of the extraordinary painted 17-mt-long paper roll (figg. 34-35).

On a first analytical level that pertains the space *on screen* – better yet, *the space in the frame*, no matter whether it delimits a filmic or a painting piece – we recognize an intertwining relationship among the exhibited artworks, aiming at building up a unique, coherent representation of reality. It is the reality of war, that of a con-

quered land, a haunted animal, a colonized man, examined and simultaneously tackled from different angles in order to underscore the engaging dimension they request. History is scrutinized to highlight its influence on the present dimension, offering the sequences proposed in the installations as an ethical legacy visualized through the analytical camera and left for the future generations. Accordingly, what has always been seen as a solely cinematographic effort aiming at proposing a strategy to write History becomes a visual and media art form¹³ that can be considered as *historiographical gesture*, that is to say an "alternative" History-writing based on an excavating and a mapping tension, as it is suitable in the frame of a "New Film History."¹⁴

The artistic research of the couple is indeed directed to represent what is missing, those who have been left in the realm of silence and invisibility: "when we re-film with our analytical camera" – said Gianikian – "we slow the speed of the reel to focus on the faces; by enlarging portions of the multitude with close ups we let individuals emerge."¹⁵ Precisely such work of filling the voids, identifying the ruptures and dealing with discontinuities seems to be what characterizes a media-archaeological attitude. This does not simply mean "entering the frame"¹⁶ to discover the hidden stratifications of it, but rather exploring its surface and depths to relate them to a wider iconography and to reality, to the value they convey, the gaze they request and the effect they produce in comparison to those requested and produced by other media. In other words, the attention towards the historicity of film finds completion as it is opened to the present and future dimensions, located in a network of discourses and practices that cross and re-launch it within a broader, heterogeneous context where its characters can be expanded, remediated, reinterpreted. In this sense, a *first trajectory* originating from the representation strategies adopted by Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi links History, ethics and a media-archaeological approach.

In this vein, the Hangar Bicocca exhibition actually shows the peculiar attention reserved to the formal and aesthetical choices of the authors: it looks like as any kind of means at their disposal is welcome to the artists to convey the ethical element guiding their work. Such element is expressed variously and adopts different styles, opening up a range of linguistic translations and expressive exchanges that relate the discontinuities of History (and the cinematic effort to turn them into continuities) to the expressive and linguistic discontinuities featuring the filmmakers' work.

Intermedial and deictic strategies off screen: dispositif, experience, gallery space and materiality

If we look at the installations considering them as a *dispositif*, at the coupling of drawings and moving images, and at the visual exchanges between films and visual-art-pieces, these elements underscore a dense, productive encounter. As the couple stated commenting on *From the Pole to the Equator*, in the watercolors "the sections of the film come up again and again, producing a gigantic sea of images."¹⁷ The constant and reciprocal interplay among these linguistic strategies articulates a rich, organic network of crossed references that builds up an intertextual narrative. Borrowing Yvonne Spielmann's term, the Hangar Bicocca exhibition presents a *system*¹⁸ featuring interconnections and common visualizations, which acquire a different consistency according to the strategy used to render them from time to time. In this sense, the various *dispositifs* are far from "fighting" each other,¹⁹ on the contrary, they promote a fruitful *ensemble* because they are used by the directors to signify their cinema. The Gianikians use different linguistic forms and techniques to complement their cinematographic effort; this is not a way to integrate the latter with ancillary representation and artistic methods, but rather an opportunity to enhance the stratified nature of the stories they tell and of the portion of History intertwined with them.²⁰ Operating in the realm of cinematic/thematic continuity, they simultaneously open up the medium to discontinuity in the attitude towards the spectator – whereas an ideal one – since they directly and bodily imply the

public in their video installations. If the analytical gesture of the filmmakers procedurally fills the voids of History with their cinema, they also take advantage of a linguistic/apparatus discontinuity that allows them to use different *dispositifs* aligned by a conceptual continuity; I would call the latter "differential continuity."

In his *Querelle des dispositifs* French scholar Raymond Bellour devotes a chapter to Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, commenting on both their cinema and installations.²¹ He defines the process characterizing the directors' films as a *mise en abyme* – a description that I believe is possibly more fitting when the images we see in the films are reworked and transferred in the frame of the installations, because it is in this very context that the "reality of the *bodies*" is

*both contemporary with their images recorded-who-knows-when and later unearthed in some archive, and re-contemporary with the images that reincarnate them today, more or less remodeled, reframed, reconstructed and represented once more. So, thanks to a modus operandi that it never fully reveals this cinema of duration, of slowed motion [...] turns out all the more to be a cinema of framing, of endeavor, of nuances [...], and extraordinary shot effects. [...] Reconfiguring any image of the world in an arrière-monde which is more real than any other, the films [– and I would argue, the installations more than the films –] incessantly produce shots that are events.*²²

Bellour's text touches several important aspects for the analysis of the Hangar Bicocca exhibition that can lead to some relevant remarks.

Firstly, the emphasis on the semantic area of body and substance (*bodies, reincarnate, remodeled*) suggests a deep sense of materiality that we both see represented and do feel directly as we encounter the images in the gallery space. The tactility featuring the texture of the image is thus emanated and mirrored in that of the device; I believe this aspect is much more central in some installations (i.e. *The march of man*), where the presence of the screen is strong and accessible, reinforcing the sensuous experience it produces, and guiding the visitors' bodily orientation through the materiality of the set-up.²³

Secondly, the concept of set-up can be related to that of *frame* mentioned in the quotation by Bellour: to a certain extent "framing" would be the task we expect the set-up to accomplish, but the author refers instead to a *reconfiguration*²⁴ that somehow provides a new writing and therefore suggests a new reading of the relationships unfolding in the gallery space. Such process reshapes the correlation between the areas devoted to host the different installations, the installations themselves and the gazes they require, the devices and the supports used to exhibit the images and the subject who perceives them.

Finally, the French scholar closes his reflection referring to the notion of *event* – this very term bridges the diegetic movement with the performative element featuring the dynamics occurring in the gallery space. The materiality of the image, that of the *dispositif*, the complex set of relations they establish or re-design take place in a real, specific spatial-temporal dimension. When a sequence of a film is excerpted to undergo a particular elaboration that will turn it into an installation, this implies a shift in the spectatorial logic: as for the scented films produced in the Seventies, Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi wink at remediation dynamics, but they mostly look for a way to (re)locate their cinema within a walkable, explorable, inhabitable space – the space of the exhibition, that of the event. Unlike those early experiences, at the Hangar Bicocca the presence of the authors is not requested anymore, because the digital images obliterate the need to have them *in praesentia*, asking instead to be grasped by the visitor. In other words, the installations primarily communicate "a sense of texture and manual craftsmanship, emphasized by the bodily implication into the artistic creation"²⁵ that is now mirrored and transferred on the spectatorship side. The resulting viewing pattern is based on performativity and situatedness,²⁶ which are in turn grounded in the conviction that spectatorship is to be seen in terms of phenomenological experience.

We enter in this sense in the *off screen* domain²⁷ of materiality, where the deictic character of the set-up does not collide with the historicity of the image on screen, but rather takes advantage of the present moment as dimension to reposition the historiographical gesture performed by the authors. The attitude characterizing such operation expresses an intermedia approach: thanks to the systemic environment it is able to favor, such attitude locates the whole exhibition inside History,²⁸ since it shapes and develops itself precisely to take it into account, and to open up a discursive perspective on the ethical challenge it poses. The price to pay in order to accomplish this task is that to set its content *inside* History, the exhibition locates itself *outside*²⁹ film history. This leads to a *second trajectory* originating from the device that assumes an intermedial approach to conceptually connect aesthetics and materiality, involving both the physical quality of the *dispositif* and the phenomenological character of spectatorship.

Conceptual shifts across history, film history, cinema history, media-history: moving outward and inward

The proposed analysis of the Gianikians' installations articulated according to the key-concepts History and materiality highlighted a parallel yet linked orientation to two possible research pathways.

On the one hand, the notion of History inspired a line of inquiry that addresses to an in-deep consideration of the representational challenges posed by the images appearing on screen. They activate a rewriting strategy that resembles a re-stage and a re-elaboration taking place on the filmic material. On the other hand, the concept of materiality suggested to analyze *NON NON NON* according to the paradigm of intermediality, enabling a conceptual move onto the off screen space. Such shift allowed us to trace a series of connections among the various artistic techniques used by the authors, and the different devices chosen to elaborate the tangible mediality of their cinema. The moving image is thus re-contextualized in the gallery space and it is related to other media, building up a visual and narrative network.

Thanks to this double-reading the authors' installations seem to emphasize the density of "cinema history," as opposed to "film history,"³⁰ coupling the attention devoted to the work *on the film*, with a complementary one focusing the work activated *by the film across its borders*.

The resulting wider perspective enables to take into proper account the qualitative complexity of the Gianikians' background, and directly implies the spectator/visitor in the viewing experience. This possibly opens up a new way to study the artists' contribution that relates their cinematic practice to an organic scenario from both the production and the reception point of view. Such perspective appears to be an exercise of media-history, as Peppino Ortoleva conceives this term, in that it tackles a multimedia dimension.³¹ In this sense, the historiographical gesture symbolized by the re-writing of History may be seen as a sort of media-archaeological move, not only thanks to the metaphorical and restorative excavation operated on the image, but rather because of its very capacity to open up a discourse about History, to set a platform for discussion, exchange and dialogue that functionally works as conjunction between intermedia and media-archaeological attitudes.³² The parallel research lines developed from the notions of History and materiality seem to cross each other and to meet at the Hangar, disclosing intertwining research trajectories that retrace an *ensemble* of practices, discourses and *dispositifs* in the authors' work, and above all enable to consider the exhibition itself as a *dispositif*. As a sort of analytical camera that enters the cinematic frame, the set-up allows the visitor to enter a space where the image suggests a materialized way to feel inside the multifaceted, exploded, mixed-media artistic frame, and establishes itself as the center of experience.

In the gallery space visitors are involved in this intertwining mechanism: materiality ceases to be limited to the sense of tangibility of the reel conveyed on screen, and enters the "direct world"³³ of the public. Therefore, a

deictic shift from representation to spectatorship is promoted by the movement beyond film history symbolized by the use of moving images in the video-installations – a movement which guides the spectator throughout his mobile, cinematic itinerary. Such movement possibly stand for the passage from the solely aesthetics of astonishment to the coupling of an aesthetics and a hermeneutics of astonishment, as it is suggested by Thomas Elsaesser. In this vein, the gallery space could be seen as a concrete restitution of those “placeless place and timeless time the film historian needs to occupy when trying to articulate, rather than merely accommodate [the] several alternative, counterfactual or parallax histories around which any study of the audio-visual multimedia moving image culture now unfolds.”³⁴

The cinematic technique and the tension to bring History into legibility typical of the authors find their extensive expression and completion in the big dimensions of the museum space, in the temporality, and the freedom of the gallery consumption pattern. I argue this is a way to go beyond the borders of film without losing moving images identity and specificity, but possibly emphasizing their ability – in Miriam Hansen’s words – to “bridge the gap between inscription and reception,”³⁵ and underscoring their power to explore the imaginary, explode the conventional use of cinema and travel through History.

Illustrations

30. *The March of Men* (2001), courtesy Hangar Bicocca.

31. The cube, courtesy Hangar Bicocca.

32-33. Continuity between cinematic and painted image, courtesy the artists/Hangar Bicocca.

34-35. Painted paper roll and watercolors as *diagrams* for the production of *From the Pole to Equator* (1986), courtesy Hangar Bicocca.

Notes

¹ Personal interview with the artists, 2012 (my translation); from now on PI. Among the most recent readings of the Gianikians’ work as an archaeological effort, please refer at least to Christa Blümlinger, *Cinema de seconde main. Esthétique du remploi au cinéma et dans l’art des nouveaux média*, Klincksieck, Paris 2013 (or. Vorwerk 2009). Less recent though important contributions on this interpretation are Bernard Benoliel, “Archéologues de la pellicule,” in *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 545, april 2000, pp. 94-95; Paolo Mereghetti, Enrico Nosei, *Cinema anni vita. Yervant Gianikian e Angela Ricci Lucchi*, Il Castoro, Milano 2000. Many authors referred to the couple as to historians; being impossible to provide a full list of texts here, the reader can find a selected bibliography on this issue in Andrea Lissoni, Chiara Bertola (eds.), *Yervant Gianikian e Angela Ricci Lucchi. NON NON NON*, Critical notebook Hangar Bicocca, no. 1, 2012 and Robert Lumley, *Entering the Frame: Cinema and History in the Films of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi*, Peter Lang, Oxford-New York 2011.

² *Ibidem*.

³ Angela Ricci Lucchi, commentary to the exhibition *NON NON NON* (Hangar Bicocca, Milan 2012), previously available on the YouTube channel of the museum.

⁴ I use here the label of media artist as Wanda Strauven does in her text *Media Archaeology: Where*

Film History, Media Art and New Media (Can) Meet (in Julia Noordegraaf, Cosetta Saba, Barbara Le Maître, Vinzenz Hediger (eds.), *Preserving and Exhibiting Media Art: Challenges and Perspectives*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2013), to which I also allude in the next lines.

³ In his attempt to discuss discursive inventions as an object of study, Erkki Huhtamo proposes to name *topoi* those parallel elements that "are not totally random coincidences produced indigenously by conglomerations of specific circumstances [but rather] 'contain' certain commonplace elements or cultural motives that have been encountered in earlier cultural processes." I suggest to interpret the Gianikians' work according to Huhtamo's concept, since it intercepts these constructs and re-activate them in the frame of the authors' production. For the full argument about *topoi*, see Erkki Huhtamo, "From Kaleidoscomaniac to Cybernerd: Notes toward an Archaeology of the Media," in *Leonardo*, vol. 30, no. 3, 1997, p. 222.

⁶ I refer here to the important study by Peppino Ortoleva and his conception of "mediastoria," intended precisely as a research that aims at "looking for [...] the basis of a deeper knowledge of media and their intrinsic logics throughout history;" such theoretical perspective "strives to identify the encounters and the reciprocal exchanges between material and social processes in history." Thus, in Ortoleva's view, "[t]o analyze the relationships among the processes connected to the concept of multimedia and the innovations occurring in the Western economic system [...] is precisely the task of a properly historical research, which would be able to frame the [sociocultural] changes and relate them to the mechanisms – both very fast, or very slow – they are part of." The scholar's formulation highlights a double intuition: on the one hand he reserves a careful attention to a systemic view of the media scenario, focusing in particular the continuities/discontinuities featuring it; on the other hand, it methodologically adopts a historical point of view to explore the same scenario. Despite such formulation dates back to the mid-Nineties, it synthesizes two characters that I find more than ever valid in the present context. Peppino Ortoleva, *Mediastoria. Mezzi di comunicazione e cambiamento sociale nel mondo contemporaneo*, Il Saggiatore, Milano 2002, p. 296, p. 270, my translation.

⁷ Andrea Lissoni, *Scrutinize, Interrogate, Scrape. Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi Explore Without Surrendering to History*, in Andrea Lissoni, Chiara Bertola (eds.), *Yervant Gianikian e Angela Ricci Lucchi. NON NON NON*, cit., p. 17.

⁸ So argues Raymond Bellour in his book *La Querelle des dispositifs. Cinéma - installations, expositions*, POL, Paris 2012.

⁹ Acknowledging the lack of an univocal definition of concepts that share a common ground such as exhibited, exposed or paracinema, I refer here to the audiovisual works the artists purposely released for the gallery space.

¹⁰ On the relationship cinema/gallery please see at least the seminal texts Alison Butler, "Feminist Film in the Gallery: *If 6 was 9*," in *Camera Obscura*, 58, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 1-31; Id., "A Deictic Turn: Space and Location in Contemporary Gallery Film and Video Installation," in *Screen*, vol. 50, no. 4, 2010, pp. 305-323; Catherine Fowler, "Room for Experiment: Gallery Films and Vertical Time from Maya Deren to Eija Liisa Ahtila," in *Screen*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2004, pp. 324-343; Id., "Into the Light: Re-considering Off-frame and Off-screen Space in Gallery Films," in *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2008, pp. 253-267; Id., "Remembering Cinema 'elsewhere': from Retrospection to Introspection in the Gallery Film," in *Cinema Journal*, no. 2, 2012, pp. 26-45.

¹¹ On the one hand, the use of the moving image outside the traditional model both in terms of format and location (not the movie but the video installation/gallery film; not the movie theatre but rather the gallery) is based on the separation of the content from its classical support, echoing what

Rosalind E. Krauss pointed out in her influential essay on post-medium condition (*Voyage on the North Sea Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, Thames & Hudson, New York 1999). On the other hand, precisely such separation is overcome, for the video installation goes beyond the structure of the traditional cinematic *dispositif* and articulates a new materiality or, as Raymond Bellour called it "an other cinema," which finds its own development within the exhibition space. The reference to Bellour is to "D'un autre cinéma," in *Traffic*, no. 34, 2000, pp. 7-12; English translation "On an Other Cinema," in Tanya Leighton (ed.), *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, Tate/Afterall, London 2008, pp. 406-422.

¹² PI.

¹³ I refer to the two-fold movement of evolution/revolution affecting artistic forms that takes place through history, to which Oliver Grau also alludes in his edited volume *MediaArtHistories*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 2007.

¹⁴ Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archaeology," in *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 14, nos. 2-3, 2004, pp. 75-117.

¹⁵ PI.

¹⁶ The allusion is to Robert Lumley, *Entering the Frame: Cinema and History in the Films of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi*, cit.

¹⁷ PI.

¹⁸ Yvonne Spielmann, *Intermedialität. Das System Peter Greenaway*, Fink, Munich 1998.

¹⁹ Raymond Bellour, *La Querelle des dispositifs. Cinéma - installations, expositions*, cit.

²⁰ The importance of stratification and non-linearity suggests a possibility to bridge media-archaeology and a Foucauldian idea of archaeology; Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, Pantheon Books, New York 1972 (or. Gallimard 1969).

²¹ The text *Exposer* offers a critical review of *NON NON NON*; Raymond Bellour, *La Querelle des dispositifs. Cinéma - installations, expositions*, cit., pp. 471-475.

²² Raymond Bellour, *Chosen Moments of the Human Race*, in Andrea Lissoni, Chiara Bertola (eds.), *Yervant Gianikian e Angela Ricci Lucchi. NON NON NON*, cit., p. 55, my emphasis (the French version of the text entitled *Des instants choisis de l'espèce humaine* is published in Raymond Bellour, *La Querelle des dispositifs. Cinéma - installations, expositions*, cit., pp. 457-463).

²³ On this issue, see Charles R. Acland, "Curtains Carts, and the Mobile Screen," in *Screen*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2009, pp. 148-166.

²⁴ The idea of reconfiguration, though termed *configuration*, is used in a quite similar sense by François Albera and Maria Tortajada. According to the two scholars, configuration would be one of the basic features of the *medium*. In their view, the latter is to be intended as "relational space," drawing therefore the attention not only on the issue of the object but on the methodological, epistemological issue connected to the ability to bridge spectator-machinery-representation typical of the medium itself. In this sense the assumed epistemology would work as a philosophy of knowledge and configuration would then operate in the same direction as "*réseau de connections*." I refer to François Albera and Maria Tortajada contribution in this volume.

²⁵ Agnes Petho, *Post-cinema and Pre-cinema and Media Archaeology in J-L Godard's Histoire(s) du cinéma*, in Id. *Cinema and Intermediality*, Cambridge Scholar Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne 2011, p. 331.

²⁶ This is the sense of "being-there-ness" mentioned by Jane Gaines in her contribution in this volume.

²⁷ On this issue please see at least Catherine Fowler, "Into the Light: Re-considering Off-frame and Off-screen Space in Gallery Films," cit.

²⁸ In her extensive study about intermediality Agnes Petho seems to embrace the opposite perspective; the analysis of Godard's *Histoires du cinéma* she proposes "positions the whole work somewhat outside of history," while I believe the intermedia element in the Gianikians' work serves the opposite aim. See Agnes Petho, *Post-cinema and Pre-cinema and Media Archaeology in J-L Godard's Histoire(s) du cinéma*, cit., p. 326.

²⁹ I echo the conceptual movement towards the outside dimension examined by André Gaudreault in his important contribution in this volume.

³⁰ Referring to the distinction introduced by New Film History, Wanda Strauven usefully summarizes it as follows: "*cinema history* [...] is the history of cinema as institution, as exhibition practice, as social space (as opposed to *film history*, which is, generally speaking, a history of masters and masterpieces)." Wanda Strauven, *Media Archaeology: Where Film History, Media Art and New Media (Can) Meet*, cit., p. 63.

³¹ See note 6; Peppino Ortoleva, *Mediastoria. Mezzi di comunicazione e cambiamento sociale nel mondo contemporaneo*, cit., in particular pp. 262 ss.

³² Stating that intermedia and media-archaeological attitudes are connected through the fluid exchange among *dispositifs* and thanks to the manipulation, the use, the work on them, explains the reason why it is the case to call Gianikian and Ricci Lucchi media artists rather than historians or archaeologists.

³³ Assuming Eugeni's formulation, I refer to the extra-diegetic dimension, the phenomenological space where the visit takes place; see Ruggero Eugeni, *Semiotica dei media. Le forme dell'esperienza*, Carocci, Roma 2010.

³⁴ Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archaeology," cit., pp. 112-3. I thank Wanda Strauven for having invited me to draw this connection, and many others in this text.

³⁵ Miriam Hansen, *Cinema and Experience. Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles 2012, p. 157.

Time/Technology





Media Archaeology as the Poetics of Obsolescence

The notion that there was some exact instant at which the tables turned, and cinema passed into obsolescence, and thereby into art, is an appealing fiction that implies a special task for the meta-historian of cinema.¹

Preliminaries

As the title indicates, my remarks have a somewhat retrospective slant, not least because they come out of a period of self-interrogation and reflection on what we have been doing these past 20 or 30 years in the study of film history and media archaeology: work, for the which North Italian triangle Pordenone-Bologna-Udine has become almost as important as the triangle Florence-Venice-Genoa was some 500 years ago: in each case, it brought a "renaissance" that radiated well beyond these narrow geographical confines. My own debt to especially Pordenone and Udine is immense, and I want to thank Leonardo Quaresima and the organizers for inviting me once more to the Film Forum. And to take up a phrase from Wanda Strauven's presentation: I am in some ways "hacking into my own history," but for this to make sense, I briefly have to sketch this history. As an inveterate cinephile since the mid-1950s and party to the discussions around the *dispositif* in the 1970s, my turn to early cinema and pre-cinema in the 1980s was determined by three factors: dissatisfaction with the lack of historical specificity in the large scale theories that came via Paris to London and found its broad dissemination in the journal *Screen*; my discovery of early cinema at Pordenone (and the echoes it found in especially the New York cinematic avant-garde around the Anthology Film Archive), and thirdly, the enormous impact of Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* and the *Archaeology of Knowledge*. Around 1988/89 I proposed the notion of "Film History as Media Archaeology" in one of the chapters of the book I edited on *Early Cinema Space Frame Narrative* (published in 1990)² – an idea that I developed further in a book called *Cinema Futures* in 1998.³ It was an attempt to reassess what had been happening in the cinema since the advent of the video-recorder, and new the role of television as, at least in Europe, a major producer of feature films. We also examined the shifting hierarchies of sound over image, the expansion of exhibition outlets, new delivery formats and distribution platforms, as well as the proliferation of screens, together with the diversified viewing conditions of the cinema experience that this entailed. *Cinema Futures* brought together essays poised on the

threshold of the digital, at a time when it was not altogether clear whether digital media constituted a radical break or merely the continuation of mechanical image making by other, i.e. electronic means, of which of course television and video were already well-established practices.

I returned to the question of media archaeology in a more programmatic essay, called "The New Film History as Media Archaeology" which was hosted by André Gaudreault's journal *CiNeMAS* in 2004, where I argued against positing a radical break between analogue and digital, and instead sought to use the advent of the digital for a more fundamental reflection on the basic assumptions of film history.⁴ In particular, I tried to make the case for what I called an "open-ended past" of the cinema, in order to counter the discussions about the "death of the cinema" that the digital had once more occasioned. I looked for overlooked inventors and entrepreneurs, for discarded and dead-end experiments, I was interested in what the past had believed as being its own future – often so different from what became the immediate actual future. Today, when both the merely imagined and the realized futures of the "pioneers" are now our distant past, some of the discarded fantasies and unfulfilled futures seem uncannily prescient and visionary, if we think of the sketches of Albert Robida or the Punch cartoon of Edison's Telephonoscope. In other words, an essential purpose of media archaeology as I conceived it was to shake up conventional chronologies and unsettle the standard periodizations, to challenge binaries such as "documentary" vs. "fiction," but above all to disprove the teleologies of "greater and greater realism," to question the assumption that the medium "film" would realize its essence through modernist reflexivity, whether phenomenological or epistemological, and to suggest that the "losers" of yesterday, in the race for "inventing" the cinema, might turn out to be the "winners" of tomorrow, and that in this sense, too, the past is never past, even where it had seemed to be lost.

Media archaeology: making the past strange again

In Amsterdam then, and largely in collaboration with Wanda Strauven and Michael Wedel, we set about examining the cinema once more, by "exploding" its parts, the way an engineering blueprint represents a composite object by giving of the parts an exploded view, i.e. of spatially distancing what in reality functions integrally and is mutually interdependent. We did a series of transversal studies (or "archaeologies") of the camera, of the screen, of projection, of the auditorium space and its relation to screen space, of synchronized sound, of movement and stillness, of luminosity and transparency, etc. I also developed what I called the underground S/M practices of the cinematic apparatus from its beginnings, i.e. its uses for surveillance and the military, for science and medicine, as sensors and for monitoring, as storage and memory, as well as highlighting the spectators' sensory-motor schemata and their transformations from the mid-19th to the late 20th century.

The question that came to intrigue me was: why had the cinema when it established itself in the last decade of the 19th and the first two decades of the 20th century put all its bets on photography (when the possibilities of electric image making and image transmission were also already known), and why had the cinema not broken with the Renaissance perspectival projection, with the rectangular framed view, and with the individualizing and subjectifying ideology that underpinned easel painting? Cubism and futurism, influenced, as we know by chronophotography, could have shown the way, but the cinema massively returned to classical modes of pictorial representation. I realized there were many reasons for this move (by no means inevitable), and also many attempts – from Eisenstein's montage theories to the perennial efforts of the various avant-gardes – to break away, but they remained by and large, minority efforts. In other words, did the cinema, right from the start, not suffer from a certain retroaction, at least in the way its history was – wrongly, as it turned out – conceived around several teleologies, which claimed that the cinema developed from primitive to mature, from fairground

attraction to legitimate art-form, from childish prank to story-telling medium, from staged and faked enactments to greater and greater realism.

Now that we are definitely exiting the monocular perspectival era also in mainstream cinema – think *Avatar* and *Inception*, think *Gravity* and *Interstellar*, think networked narratives and mind-game films – it becomes both more obvious what could have been the alternative possibilities not taken up or actively suppressed, and it becomes less inevitable that the framed rectangle and the “window on the world,” along with linear story-telling had to impose themselves with such self-evident force.

These, then, are some of the considerations that now make me reflect more critically, and “hack” into this history. Because my sense is that media archaeology has in the meantime not only become the new orthodoxy, the default value that allows some scholars to ignore the cinema altogether and move straight to the sexier bits of on-line media forms and new media practices, but it has also allowed us to rummage in film history, in early cinema and pre-cinema, as if film history was the Portobello Road flea market, where you acquire this or that useless object to decorate your mental living room with.

I won't and can't compete with Siegfried Zielinski's messianic fervor, sketching for us an an-archaeology and a global variantology that successfully rescues the past for a future yet to come.⁵ But I share some of his misgivings about the temptation to appropriate the past too quickly for our own purposes by seeing everything that strikes us as remarkable in the present as having been “anticipated” a hundred or so years ago, when one of the initial impulses of media-archaeology was to make the past strange again, rather than all too familiar. Nonetheless I neither want to repudiate what has been a significant part of my own intellectual history, nor disavow those colleagues, students and conference organizers who have shared and supported these travels in time, in search of hidden pedigrees and lost paternities, and who have worked on these inventions of traditions that have helped to make film and media studies an indispensable part of the humanities and beyond.

Obsolescence as meta-mechanics

Instead, I want to explore a little more closely one of the borders of history, namely the increasing interest in the idea of obsolescence, as both a cover for an all-too-readily assumed (and consumed) nostalgia for several kinds of pre- or proto-cinematic golden ages, and as an expression of more conflicted ways of coping with the sheer presumption of novelty and the new. Obsolescence as nostalgia tends to fetishize the “first machine age” of cinema, centered on its basic apparatus (that Hollis Frampton wisely called “the last machine”),⁶ in a gesture that blends the superiority of hindsight with the envy of lost innocence. Yet obsolescence as a mimetic impulse towards re-enactment, recovery and redemption can open a rich field of further reflection precisely for remapping the borders of (film) history. To recapitulate:

The term, “obsolescence” has in recent years re-appeared in the vocabulary of both media historians⁷ and of the art world,⁸ as a quick look at Google entries will also confirm.⁹ In the process, it has significantly changed its meaning, by enlarging its semantic and evaluative range. From being a negative term within the technicist-economic discourse of “progress through creative destruction,” it became a critical term in Marxist discourse, when designers and marketing people advanced the principle of “planned” or “built-in” obsolescence, while critics of consumerism in the 1950s, such as Vance Packard, attacked such planned obsolescence as both wasteful and immoral.¹⁰

But now the meaning of obsolescence has once more shifted: it has entered the realm of the positive, signifying something like heroic resistance to relentless acceleration, and in the process has become the badge of honour of the no-longer-useful (which by itself associates the obsolete with the “disinterestedness” of the aesthetic

impulse).¹¹ Obsolescence can even be the rallying point for sustainability and recycling, while also making an eloquent plea for an object-oriented philosophy and a new materialism of singularity and self-sufficiency of being.¹²

The questions this raises are twofold: what might be the reasons for these changes in meaning and reference, and what exactly is our own speaking position, i.e. where do we film scholars stand, as we re-evaluate the obsolete as potentially the new gold standard of "authenticity" or even – to speak with Alain Badiou – as our own "fidelity to the event?" To take the second question first: no doubt, the reason we can name the concept of obsolescence and play with its meanings, is because of our awareness that with digital media we have crossed a metaphoric Rubicon, which casts in a new light everything on the other side. Just as we had to retroactively invent the word "analogue" to distinguish it from the digital, or rebrand the word "vinyl" to designate what used to be called a "record,"¹³ once musical recordings became compact discs and mp3 files, so we are marking with the word "obsolescence" a rift or a rupture that seems to put us in this superior position, but also in a position of belatedness. In other words, the obsolete occupies an ambiguous place, from which we may well wish to take an inner distance: either ironic or empathetic, or both. Given its previously negative connotations, obsolescence might even join those self-ascriptions, where a minority proudly refers to itself by the abusive or offensive terms the majority insinuates under its breath: the obsolete understood as the *bad-ass* or *steam punk* among the shiny media gadgets of the digital era.

As the cycles of updates, upgrades in the field of consumer electronic and software have speeded up, obsolescence necessarily connotes or implies the digital as its negative foil. This is reflected in some of its current definitions:

Obsolescence is the state of being which occurs when an object, service, or practice is no longer wanted even though it may still be in good working order. Obsolete refers to something that is already disused or discarded, or antiquated. [...] A growing industry sector is facing issues where the life cycles of products no longer fit together with life cycles of components. This [gap] is known as obsolescence, [and it] is most prevalent for electronics technology [...] However, obsolescence extends beyond electronic components to other items, such as materials, textiles, and mechanical parts. In addition, obsolescence has been shown to appear for software, [manufacturing] specifications, standards, processes, and soft resources, such as human skills.¹⁴

The last part of the sentence is compelling, since it spells out the antiquatedness and includes the obsolescence of what are here called the "soft resources," i.e. human skills and by extension, human beings: a point I shall return to, since it hints at our own anxieties of not being able to keep pace with the accelerated turnover-cycles that technology and capitalism are imposing on human life-cycles.¹⁵ But first I want to suggest a slightly different context within which obsolescence has gained new currency, albeit also not without its own ambivalences and potential pitfalls. This context I want to call the need to re-invent history, and it is under this heading that I think it deserves our special attention at a conference on the "borders of the historical."

The ends of history or the borders of history?

For the past 20-odd years we have heard about the "end of history." Francis Fukuyama's essay by that title from 1989, even though commenting on the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Communism of that year, was itself the tail-end of debates throughout the 1970s and 1980s about the end of the grand narratives, the end of the Enlightenment belief in progress: in short, the post-Marxist, post-modern arguments associated with the names

of Jean Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard and Michel Foucault. When Baudrillard denounced "la mode retro" as fetishistic, arguing that "the cinema is fascinated by itself as a lost object as much as it (and we) are fascinated by the real as a lost referent,"¹⁶ he was speaking from a position where history (i.e. political and social change) was still considered a possibility, even as he acknowledged that "history is the lost referent." When Foucault's recast the order of things, in order to lay bare the archaeology of knowledge, its epistemes and the micro-politics that bind power to discourse, he no longer assumed a historical force, whose loss or absence one might mourn, but posited instead that the distinct epistemes followed each other more or less only by the rupture that separated them, refraining from naming the dynamics that determined the shift from one episteme to the other.

Much of media archaeology initially arose from this Foucauldian moment, casting doubt on linear film history or mono-causal accounts of the emergence of cinema. But this "turn" is also echoed several other challenges to history as a discipline that aligned facts and evidence in orderly sequences. In particular, two distinct but related concepts, namely "the archive" and "memory" came to compete with the idea of history as it had developed since the 19th century. As revolutions, wars and other human disasters of the 20th century presented those who came after with events whose aftermath and consequences exceeded the categories usually associated with history, both the archive and memory emerged as alternative organizing principles. Neither is subject to a strictly linear trajectory, nor are they obliged to follow the unidirectional arrow of time. Instead they have accustomed us to a *spatialization of time* that allows for simultaneity and co-presence of distinct moments in time and space. The spatial turn has altered our notions of causality, away from the billiard ball model, to more complex and contradictory relations of multiple causal chains, to seriality and repetition, to stochastic causality, as well as a preference bias towards associationist causal agents, all the way to the present preoccupation with contingency as the sole causal ground.

Another consequence of the spatial turn in history has been the reliance on narrative as a mainstay of historiography. In the 1970s Hayden White's *Metahistory* taught us that certain rhetorical and narrative tropes have been as the core of the argumentative modes that secured plausible historical explanation. No more: perhaps the days are not far off, when narrative – already under pressure from game theory – comes to be seen as only one possible, even if widely used way of ordering or organizing perceptual data, actions and events in a comprehensible and easily communicable way. Narrative has been mankind's privileged storage mode for at least 5,000 years, modelling itself on the human experience of time as succession in sequence, and thus following the logic of the "post-hoc ergo propter hoc," while taking as its dramatic arc (as well as its default value) the life cycle of beginning, middle and end. But now that archival principles increasingly compete with narratives, other storage modes and methods of access and recall may arise that reduce narrative, also with respect to history, to one special instance of how to render the past both present and intelligible.

The memory turn has also affected our view of history, especially since we tend to associate memory with trauma. After all, it is usually the catastrophes of the 20th century, and among these, above all the Holocaust that are most often cited as the reason why we have become so preoccupied with collective and cultural memory.¹⁷ The purported objectivity of history – the account of who did what to whom, when, where and for what reasons – has proven to be inadequate as an appropriate response, so that memory – the living testimony, the subjective-affective account and the partial perspective – steps in to fill the gap or acts as a placeholder for the incomprehensible that we need to hold on to, as proof that we are still committed to seeking out the truth, even as understanding eludes us for the events that most affect us.

Yet memory and trauma are also at the forefront of our dealings with the past for reasons other than the disasters of the 20th century. Thus, the fact that digital media have put at our disposal quantities of machine memory and archival storage space hitherto unimaginable in both depth and breadth, in both speed of access and

ease of arrangement and manipulation, has also contributed to the crisis in history. The database and the archive: on the one hand, the freedom to create new orders of being that comes from random access, and on the other hand, the pressure to find new levels of generality and constraint – in the form of meta-data – in order to cope with the sheer quantity of information, or big data, has made memory and trauma useful concepts for giving a human face and an experiential dimension to the challenges of information overload and the deluge of data. Yet the archive, as Jacques Derrida has eloquently argued, is not a neutral repository of documents, or a *Wunderkammer* of collected curiosities, but imposes its own power structures and meaning making mechanism.¹⁸

Social media are the negative proof of Derrida's archive fever. They testify to our willingness to outsource our personal archive, i.e. our inner and outer lives, our daily routines and our most precious sentiments, attaching more and more of our lives to database logics, probability calculus and algorithmic preference routines which in turn inexorably eat away at history's two main functions, namely to assure us of our place and identity in the succession of generations, and to allow us to anticipate the future by learning from the past. Nowadays more often than not, history is either a risk assessment, projected backwards, or a sea of information and a set of data, ready to be collected and marshalled in support of present needs, political imperatives or national preoccupations. At the borders of history, then, lies data-mining and information-management.

Media-memory as a challenge to history

There is also a reason more directly pertinent to film studies and cinema history why especially memory has become such a prominent challenge to history. Our cinematic legacy, which is to say, the quantities of moving images and recorded sound, both their abundance and precarious survival, their vivid testimony and evidentiary power are forces, whose implications we are only beginning to fully reckon with.

If history takes over from memory precisely at the point where the past is no longer embodied in a living substance, but only accessible through the material traces that an event or a person have left behind, then recorded sound and moving images present history and memory with a conundrum and a paradox: for recorded sound and moving images are both more than mere traces and less than full embodiment, they have the uncanny power of conjuring up the living presence, while also remaining mere echoes and shadows of what once was. On film, the past has never really passed, so how can it become history? Instead, the ghostly para-life or after-life of movies, whether fictional or documentary, whether whole or in bits and pieces, whether carefully crafted or taken on the fly, is by its very nature closer to what we understand by traumatic memory, understood as the sudden presence of past events that can recur or repeat themselves, with the full force of the lived instant, at once separate from us, and yet all too familiar. In other words, our present tendency to privilege memory over history, as the more authentic and truthful, and to associate memory above all with trauma, may to some extent be less due to actual historical traumata, and more a symptom of our culture's way of coping with the fact that the history of the 20th century is also made up of the repositories of its mechanically and electronically recorded sounds and images: archives for which we are only beginning to find the sorting routines and narrative tropes that can manage their meanings and make bearable their magnitude. The call for digital humanities, and the discussions about meta-data are further symptoms: of both the challenge the filmic legacy poses and our present disarray in adequately dealing with it.¹⁹

In the confrontation with this massive material presence of images, which won't join the natural cycle of decay, since motion pictures of whatever kind are both lost to life and yet survive the death of what they display, the full resonances of the term "obsolescence" makes its reappearance, as perhaps the code word for some of the

ambiguities and contradictions that the undeadness of moving images have saddled us with. Obsolescence names the grieving and mourning, the denial and disavowal, but it also nurtures an insane hope and hubris that we might be able to bring this embalmed past back to life.

Obsolescence begets scarcity, and scarcity creates value

A good example of both the hope and the hubris but also sign of a more parasitic appropriation of the filmic legacy is the archaeological impulse that feeds the web with millions of videos on YouTube or Vimeo, effectively living off (and trying to monetarize) the accumulated capital of past generations. Although we all benefit from this cornucopia of so many past films having become instantly present, this scattering of the family silver may have long-term cultural implications even beyond the knotty problems of copyright and ownership. If media archaeology originally set out to impress upon us the otherness of the past, its singularity and strangeness, then the universal availability of so much material now requires the creation of *new kinds of scarcity* in order to confer "distinction," preserve "status" or generate "value." Obsolescence begets scarcity, and scarcity creates value.²⁰

The art-world and museum spaces are the traditional environments where scarcity, tagged as uniqueness, autonomy and originality, is turned into value. It is thus not surprising that these are also the sites where obsolescence has become a major factor in the reflexive turn that the cinema has taken at the end of its first century. It will not have escaped anyone's attention that the moving image – in the form of video installations, documentaries, essay films, or more generally as the proliferation of black boxes inside the white cube – has made a dramatic entry into the contemporary art scene. Suddenly screen and projection, motion and sound are everywhere, when previously hushed silence and the stillness of immersive contemplation reigned supreme in the temples of art we call museums. Some reasons are internal to the development of modern art practice, if one accepts that for many of today's artists, a digital camera and a computer are as much primary tools of the trade as a paintbrush and canvas were a hundred years ago. Other reasons are part of a complicated trade-off between avant-garde cinema – agonizing and near death since the 1980s – and blockbuster exhibitions, Biennales, bi-annuals and documenta's: art has become a mass medium, exhibitions are the theme parks for the world's middle-classes, and art tourism now sustains cities like Amsterdam and Venice, Paris and Berlin, Belfast, Bilbao and Brisbane. And this means that the big brand museums – networked or franchised as they now are – have the means to commission artists to make films and videos, when such funds have long since dried up for filmmakers either trying to reach a cinema audience or find a niche on late-night television.

But why, then, do we see so many works that pay tribute to the cinema's past, and do so preferably by displaying the rattling machinery of projection almost as often as they feature the projected image itself? Why, for instance, has there been this love affair of artists with the 16mm projector, repurposed or retrofitted, to show celluloid strips in a loop, or when exhibited as a piece of light sculpture, without any film at all, but reassuringly obsolete thanks to the purring sound of the gears and spools, become mechanical wind-up toys?

One answer is that there is now a general sense of ownership of the cinema on the part of the art world, manifest most clearly in the changing approach of the museums. When, starting in the mid-1990s, institutions like Tate Modern, the Pompidou Centre, or the Whitney in New York began making big claims in this respect, they usually had the institutional power, the legitimacy (and the money) to enforce these claims. The museum world has essentially "acquired" or "appropriated" the cinematic avant-garde, not only by commissioning new work, but contextualizing its display in their own terms. The career of an artist I have been following closely for more than forty years – Harun Farocki – is exemplary in this respect: he moved from being a relatively little-known

political filmmaker between the 1960s to the 1980s, to becoming an internationally acclaimed installation artist, specializing in warfare and surveillance, manual labor and monitor-controlled machines. He, too, is a media archaeologist, using found footage and industrial films, along with CCTV images and military training video-games, finding for his political concerns and contemporary themes in the gallery a public sphere that seems to have disappeared from cinema history and even media archaeology as currently practised.²¹

But the problem of appropriation remains, especially if we also think of how media archaeology initially was careful to give a local habitation and a name, i.e. both historical context and authorship, to the objects and practices it recovered from oblivion and neglect. The new sense of ownership of the cinema and its history claimed by museums has different priorities and a different agenda. And what about the artists themselves, many of whom now see themselves as curators, sometimes just of their own work, but also more boldly, as curators of the cinematic archive? They, too, claim ownership to the cinema, and derive from it the right of appropriation. Symptomatic for artists' cinema – the term now widely used in English for what the French call *cinéma d'exposition* – is the recycling, re-staging or reworking of the classics, preferably the works of Alfred Hitchcock: Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho*, Matthias Müller and Christoph Girardet's *The Phoenix Tapes*, Johan Grimmonprez' *Looking for Alfred* – to name only three out of a dozen that come to mind.²²

This new sense of ownership of the cinema by the museum, by artists and art spaces is not altogether unconnected with curious conjuncture of the forever foretold "death of cinema" and an anniversary. It was as if the centenary of the Lumière Brothers invention in 1995 became the ideal occasion to praise the cinema in order to better bury it. The success of a number of ambitious, large scale exhibitions, such as *Hall of Mirrors* at MoCA in Los Angeles, *Spellbound* at the Hayward Gallery in London, *Into the Light* at the Whitney in New York, *X-Screen* at MUMOK in Vienna, *Le Mouvement des Images* at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, or *The Cinema Effect: Illusion, Reality and the Moving Image* at the Hirshhorn Gallery at the Smithsonian in Washington, helped to promote the notion that the proper place for the history of the cinema – and not just avant-garde cinema – is now the curated exhibition in the museum:

In the age of digital convergence, film is increasingly becoming a touchstone for new media and video art – no longer as antipode to these media (themselves divergent), but as constructed archetype for all moving images. Whereas earlier surveys have posited film as metaphor or have emphasized sampling and mimicry, the Hirshhorn's two-part endeavor focuses on cinema's cognitive effects. The first instalment explores the ways time-based media transport us to dreamlike states; the second, their ability to construct new realities. Forty works made between 1963 and 2006 will be contributed by nearly as many artists. The roster suggests we can expect everything from the sumptuous qualities of celluloid (Tacita Dean) to interpellation into the cinematic apparatus (Anthony McCall) to surreal projected video (Paul Chan).²³

The museum: a politics of obsolescence

The Hirshhorn statement confirms a dictum by Boris Groys, to the effect that today art is not made by artists, but by curators, because in order to decide what is art, you *first* have to be in control of the space where it appears; *second*, of the institution that guarantees its authenticity, and *third*, of the discourses that legitimate it.²⁴ This seems to be true of the cinematic archive, too, and what I call the "politics of obsolescence" here works entirely in favour of the museum, in the sense that it constitutes a kind of takeover bid, where it is not yet clear, whether it is a hostile or friendly take-over bid, leaving it an open question whether the museum (popularity) or the movies (status) that benefit most from their mutual re-alignment.

And yet, an undeniable fascination with obsolescence also stands behind the new cinephilia: one that no longer

merely venerates the *cinéma d'auteur*, but also no longer shuns the Hollywood genre film; one that makes little distinctions between high culture and popular culture: it happily raids the icebox, and in the process, it makes films anonymous and turns them into fragments. It celebrates the cinema in the form of found footage compilations, using home movies (Peter Forgacs), industrial films (Gustav Deutsch), medical films, pornography, in short, it poeticises all those areas where the moving image has been used to record and document processes, events and actions. And artists are often welcomed and invited by the film archives themselves, because they are seen to add value to holdings that have lain dormant in vaults or storage facilities all over the world, for which no uses could as yet be found. Artists' sense of ownership means that sometimes they forget or ignore prior authorship or provenance, sometimes they deliberately strip context and sometimes they obfuscate the origins of the material in question, so as to present their re-working and re-staging as a surreal collage of fresh fragment or as the walk-in installation of an uncannily familiar space. The black box then also becomes a black box in the technical sense, as a space within which anything is possible, where input and output are not pre-determined.²⁵

At the other end of the spectrum, the collage and compilation can produce its own kind of apotheosis, as with Christian Marclay's *The Clock*, which has raised the stakes considerably for anyone dreaming of making a cinephile "found footage film," at once proving and disproving that film history's undiscovered riches, are lying right there at the surface, in the myriad of objects, details, sounds, gestures and textures, by working – indeed labouring – on the this film history's "optical unconscious." For it is with works like *The Clock* (and to some extent with the films of Matthias Müller or Gustav Deutsch) that a "poetics of obsolescence" encounters – and counters – the art world's "politics of obsolescence." Poetics is a slippery term, situated as it is between critical theory and self-imposed creative constraints, between media archaeology and free-form improvisation, but by "poetics of obsolescence" I am not only referring to the already mentioned totemic use of 16mm celluloid by a Tacita Dean, the regular clacking of a carousel slide projector of a Nan Goldin or a James Coleman installation, or the recurring typewriters in William Kentridge and Rodney Graham.

These are the outward signs, the trademarks, as it were, by which artists flag the value they attach to such a *mise-en-scène* of obsolescence. In many ways, obsolescence has become the overarching concept, under whose broad etymological expanse and varied figurations the appropriation of the cinema as shared heritage, but also its valorization as the artists' privileged domain of (self-)reflexivity and re-assessment proceeds most effectively, forming a slender bridge between an institutional trafficking with nostalgia and retro-fashion, and the artists tentatively optimistic re-examination of the cinema – a medium that art history has assiduously ignored for the best part of the 20th century. What is crucial, it seems to me, is that the poetics of obsolescence announces a different relation between present, past and future, not just by acts of creative anachronism, but also by treating technological obsolescence like an anchor, cast into the churning sea of an uncertain future, brought on not only by the episteme of the digital, but also by the globalization of art and museum practice. In this reflexive-retroactive turn, artists enact something of deeper significance, also for the rest of us. The present moment, cognizant of its (social) stasis and (political) paralysis, can look at the past's obsolescence as if into a mirror of its own fate, and not only take comfort from it, but by actively preserving these obsolete objects and treasure their uselessness, we protect, love and redeem ourselves, in a proxy gesture of half-acknowledged narcissism.

The big museums that are now appropriating the cinema's rich history and varied legacy, are seizing the opportunity to service our generalized nostalgia and longing for lost innocence, by giving it the rationale of guarding the archive and preserving the heritage. In its shadow and under its patronage, film-, video- and digital artists can thus practice their own poetics: proactively and prophylactically deploying obsolete technologies, in order to counter the ephemerality of work that increasingly depends for its performance and presence on audio-visual hardware or digital software. Such work demands that future curators turn themselves into archivists: they

need to catalogue, store and study not only the work as such, but also the technologies required to put it once more on display. These supporting technologies – hardware like tape-recorders or overhead projectors, software like disk-formats or operating systems – may yet become the most valued part of the artwork, in a kind of master-slave dialectical reversal, where the obsolete is respected for its self-oblivion and resistant materiality, for what Roland Barthes called “the obtuse meaning,” as an antidote against too much signification, too much intentionality and meaning.²⁶ Thus, it is not only the case that trash becomes treasure, in a value cycle where obsolescence has always been an integral part: discarded objects may be rubbish, but if they are kept long enough, they become collectibles, and as collectibles, if only they become scarce enough, they advance to being classics, and even – given the proper discourse – art.²⁷

The artist: a poetics of obsolescence

Obsolescence, understood as the survival of a witness to past “newness” while renouncing past utility, can therefore also harbour utopian aspirations, and even be the vehicle of lost promises and unfulfilled potential. This positive view of the poetics of obsolescence we can trace back to Walter Benjamin and his reflections on the surrealist object.²⁸ Freed from utility and market value, both the hand-crafted implement and the industrially made commodity can reveal unexpected beauty and deploy a potent charm: out of the transition from use-value to display value, and from cult object to the disenchantment of the world, Benjamin derived not only an exalted view of the collector,²⁹ but also a whole theory of the origins of art. Extending his thinking, one can say that when reclaiming the discarded, preserving the ephemeral and redeeming the newly useless, we are also paying tribute to sustainability and the ethics of recycling, even if only in the form of the symbolic act that is the work of art, or the scholarly discourse of the media-archaeologist.

At this point it is worth recalling Marshall McLuhan's tetrad of media effects: “What does the medium *enhance and amplify*? What does the medium *discard* and make *obsolete*? What does the medium *reverse* or how does it *flip* when pushed? What does the medium *retrieve* that had been discarded?”³⁰ With only minor adjustments – for instance, by inverting the direction of McLuhan's causal arc from old to new, and allowing for the discovery of the new *in* the old medium, and not only the effects of the new *on* the old medium – the current interactions between the art world and the cinematic archive are holding all these parts of McLuhan's tetrad in suspended animation: whether we think of art historian Rosalind Krauss advocating the post-medium condition as the “new medium specificity” in her effort to rescue modernism,³¹ whether we take the museum space as the critical site at the intersection of *enhancement* (value creation) and *retrieval* (public access), or whether we study artists like Tacita Dean, Rodney Graham, or William Kentridge, pushing the old medium to the point where it *flips*, in the full awareness that the digital has effected a kind of figure-ground reversal, with the old emerging as the new “new.”³²

At the heart of many of these processes and phenomena is our own deeply paradoxical cultural moment, where to be retro is to be novel, where “going vintage” is “avant-garde.” The wider implications, however, suggest that the poetics of obsolescence and the idea of progress (or what is left of it) have become the recto and verso of each other: through obsolescence we negatively conjure up the ghost of progress past. In this sense, one of the strategic uses of obsolescence as a critical concept can be found in the fact that, being a term that inevitably associates both capitalism and technology, it is of special interest in the context of both the art world and the audio-visual media, both old and new, because it implicitly acknowledges that today there is no art outside capitalism and technology. Both our historical and critical thinking needs to take account of this fact, and as film scholars and media archivists, this insight comes more easily to us than it does to art historians and curators.

Obsolescence, then, would hint at a political dimension, since the contemporary art world seems to have succumbed to the dialectics of (technological) innovation and (capitalist) obsolescence, rather than remaining the bulwark against creative destruction, impervious to the cycles of fashion that it claims to be. Yet how could it be otherwise? If capitalism is indeed the most revolutionary, which is to say, the most disruptive force in the contemporary world, it is at the same time, the untranscendable horizon of our thinking and being. This not only means that there is no outside to the inside, which renders any critical stance that much more difficult to protect from being co-opted, but it gives obsolescence a new kind of self-contradictory dignity: it is on the inside, but it makes its stand against the inside, and thus speaks a paradoxical truth of which it is itself the embodiment. The fact that obsolescence can be the new "new" is therefore not only a sign that the fashion system now fully pervades cultural production (as Boris Groys would have it); it also confirms the point with which I began: namely that we have lost our faith in progress, and thus our belief in history.

Obsolescence is "history at a standstill," to vary Benjamin's famous aphorism about the allegorical image. But by arresting history, suspending time and reversing its flow, obsolescence can be a moment of reassessment as well as of renewal, which is why I want to insist that obsolescence implies a special relation of past to present that no longer follows the direct linearity of cause and effect, but takes the form of a *loop*, where the present rediscovers a certain past, to which it then attributes the power to shape aspects of the future that are now our present. Remaining within Benjamin's frame of reference, we can cite his messianic conception of *Jetztzeit* or Now-time, and say that "the past is always formed in and by the present. It comes into discourse *analeptically* in relation to a present, and since it is read from the standpoint of the present, it is *proleptic* as well, in that it forms 'the time of the now'."³³ This analeptic-proleptic relationship I call the "loop of belatedness," which is to say, we retroactively discover the past to have been prescient and prophetic, as seen from the point of view of some special problem or urgent concern in the here and now. Much of our work as media archaeologists is, for good or ill, caught in this loop of belatedness, where we retroactively assign or attribute uncanny agency to a moment or a figure from the past that suddenly speaks to us in a special way.

As media archaeologists we have often favoured the archaeology of the cinema over the history of films. Much of the new film history, for instance, was proud of doing its work without actually watching any films, and we pitied those who were laboriously extrapolating social history or ideology on the basis of some more or less obscure hermeneutic process. If however, I am right in saying that film, by its peculiar ontology of undeadness and not-aliveness effectively suspends or undermines the very possibility of a history as traditionally understood, our move to archaeology is not going to help us forever. The gap between film on one side, and the cinema on the other is bound to open up again, if it has not done so already: for what exactly lurks at the borders of the historical? If we go to contemporary system theory, for instance to Niklas Luhmann, we learn that history does not exist, indeed the very idea of the past is only a prosthetic fiction we have invented in order to map repetition and difference, to which we add causality, in order not be swallowed up by the inexorable contingency of our lived reality. If we go to quantum physics, cause and effect either do not exist or are taken to be reversible: physicists like Stephen Hawking and Thomas Hertog propose a "top down cosmology" that views the universe as having begun in every possible way, with the most probable pasts being determined right now.³⁴ Thus, it would seem that the loop of belatedness, which I associate with the poetics of obsolescence, is neither as tautological nor as retrograde as it might appear. For at the borders of the historical lies also our mortality, and the irreversibility of the arrow of time for all living beings. "Films" (in the digital age), with their apparent suspension of this irreversibility would seem to mock us with the promise of some sort of immortality, whereas "cinema" (envisaged once more as the dark space, the cave, the camera obscura) preserves all the terrors of mortality, and becomes the very epitome of our precariousness as individual subjects and as a species. This is perhaps why Raymond Bellour wants to call "cinema" only that which insists on the irreversibility of the pro-

jected image.³⁵ But it also suggests that the gap that has opened up between the ontology of "film" and the archaeology of "cinema" is an important one, indeed an essential one: it helps us keep the faith in the potential of a future, even if as a species, it is not sure we have one, and reconciles us to the knowledge that as a blip in the universe, we never had a past. Media archaeology, understood as part of a poetics of obsolescence, would be the perfect balancing act between both these possibilities, where the future of the cinema renews itself whenever we experience its obsolescence as a promise. It is, as Hollis Frampton indicates, "an appealing fiction."

Notes

¹ Hollis Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses," in *Artforum*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1971, p. 35.

² Thomas Elsaesser, *Early Cinema. From Linear History to Mass Media Archaeology*, in Id. (ed.), *Early Cinema. Space Frame Narrative*, BFI, London 1990, pp. 1-8.

³ Thomas Elsaesser, Kay Hoffmann (eds.), *Cinema Futures: Cain Abel or Cable*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 1998.

⁴ Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archaeology," in *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 14, nos. 2-3, 2004, pp. 71-117.

⁵ Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Seeing and Hearing by Technical Means*, MIT Press, Cambridge 2006.

⁶ Hollis Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses," cit., p. 35.

⁷ In 2013 the University of Göttingen hosted a major conference entitled *Cultures of Obsolescence* (<http://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/419609.html>).

⁸ See *October 100: Obsolescence: A Special Issue*, no. 100, 2002.

⁹ Among the googled terms were "digital obsolescence," "media obsolescence," "obsolescence – hardware and media," "dead media – obsolescence and redundancy," "dead media walking? Obsolete communications systems," etc.

¹⁰ Vance Packard, *The Waste-Makers*, Vance Packard Inc., Philadelphia 1960.

¹¹ In May 2014 the punk band GRYSCL released an album called *Finding Comfort in Obsolescence* (<http://brokenworldmedia.bandcamp.com/album/finding-comfort-in-obsolence>).

¹² See Steven J. Jackson, Laewoo Kang, "Breakdown, Obsolescence and Reuse: HCI and the Art of Repair," http://sjackson.infosci.cornell.edu/Jackson&Kang_BreakdownObsolescenceReuse%28CH12014%29.pdf.

¹³ Originally vinyl referred to vinyl chloride, an industrial plastic, which derives its mellifluous name from wine, because of its remote kinship with ethyl alcohol. As a retronym, "vinyl" interestingly does not name the process (recording) or product (sound), but refers to their material substratum, thus signalling a shift in affective attention.

¹⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obsolescence>.

¹⁵ Acceleration has become another ambiguous word in this context, connoting on the one hand the bad object, against which "slow" has been valorized, while on the other hand, the Acceleration Manifesto claims that only the need for speed will ensure our future.

¹⁶ Jean Baudrillard, *History: A Retro Scenario*, in Id., *Simulacra and Simulation*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1994, pp. 43-48, p. 47.

¹⁷ See for instance Michael S. Roth, *Memory, Trauma, and History: Essays on Living with the Past*, Columbia University Press, New York 2011.

¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1996.

¹⁹ Scholars like Franco Moretti, Alan Liu and Lev Manovich have been at the forefront of the debate around the "perils and promises" of digital humanities. See Alan Liu's blog (<http://liu.english.ucsb.edu/is-digital-humanities-a-field-an-answer-from-the-point-of-view-of-language>), Scott Kleiman (<http://scottkleiman.net/blog/2014/02/24/digital-humanities-as-gamified-scholarship/>) or the critical notes sounded by Adam Kirsch (<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/117428/limits-digital-humanities-adam-kirsch>).

²⁰ In this context, a remark by Tacita Dean is instructive: "obsolescence hounds my working life. Laboratories close down. Shops no longer stock spools [...]. And so obsolescence ends in an underworld of people dealing from dark rooms and flea-market stalls, until enough time passes, so that whatever it was that was obsolete, has now become rare. And rare no longer holds my attention." *October*, no. 100, 2002, p. 26.

²¹ See the commemorative issue of e-flux on Harun Farocki, October 2014 (<http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/issue-59-harun-farocki-out-now/>).

²² For a more extended analysis of Hitchcock in the museum, see Thomas Elsaesser, *Casting Around: Hitchcock's Absence*, in Johan Grimonprez, *Looking for Alfred: The Hitchcock Castings*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern 2007, pp. 139-161.

²³ See "The Cinema Effect: Illusion, Reality, and the Moving Image," Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC. Curated by Kerry Brougher, Anne Ellegood, Kelly Gordon, and Kristen Hileman.

²⁴ Boris Groys, "The Art Exhibition as Model of a New World Order," in *Open 16: The Art Biennial as a Global Phenomenon. Strategies in Neo-political Times*, NAI Publications, Rotterdam 2009, pp. 56-65.

²⁵ On found footage films, see the essays collected in Cecilia Hausheer, Christoph Settele (eds.), *Found Footage Film*, VIPER/zyklop, Luzern 1992, and Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video*, Duke University Press, Durham 1999.

²⁶ Roland Barthes, *The Third Meaning: Research Notes on some Eisenstein Stills*, in Stephen Heath (ed.), *Image Music Text*, Hill & Wang, New York 1977, pp. 49-68.

²⁷ On value cycles, see Michael Thompson, *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1979.

²⁸ Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," in *New Left Review*, no. 108, 1978, pp. 47-56.

²⁹ On collecting, see Walter Benjamin, *Unpacking my Library*, in Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations*, Schocken Books, New York 1969, pp. 59-67.

³⁰ Marshall McLuhan, *The Tetrad of Media Effect*, in Id., Eric McLuhan, *Laws of Media: The New Science*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1988.

³¹ Rosalind Kraus, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, Thames & Hudson, London 2000.

³² "Everything that excites me no longer functions in its own time. [...] I court anachronism – things that were once futuristic but are now out of date – and I wonder if the objects and buildings I seek were ever, in fact, content in their own time, as if obsolescence was invited at their conception." Tacita Dean, *October*, cit., p. 26.

³³ Jeremy Tamplin, *Becoming Posthumous: Life and Death in Literary and Cultural Studies*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2001, p. 4.

Media Archaeology as the Poetics of Obsolescence

³⁴ "Instead of looking for some fundamental set of initial physical laws under which our Universe unfolded, it starts 'at the top', with what we see today, and works backwards to see what the initial set of possibilities might have been. In effect, says Hertog, the present 'selects' the past [...]. If we start from where we are now, it is obvious that the current Universe must 'select' those histories that lead to these conditions." Philip Ball, "Hawking rewrites history... backwards," in *Nature News*, 2006, <http://www.bioedonline.org/news/nature-news/hawking-rewrites-history-backwards>.

³⁵ "La projection vécue d'un film en salle, dans le noir, le temps prescrit d'une séance plus ou moins collective, est devenue et reste la condition d'une expérience unique de perception et de mémoire, définissant son spectateur et que toute situation autre de vision altère plus ou moins. Et cela seul vaut d'être appelé 'cinéma'." Raymond Bellour, *La Querelle des dispositifs. Cinéma, installations, expositions*, P.O.L., Paris 2012, p. 14.

Une épistémologie des dispositifs pour repenser les limites de la notion de média

Introduction

Nous voulons proposer ici – dans la suite de ce qui a été engagé lors du 7^e colloque Domitor de 2002 (à Montréal) avec « L'Epistémè 1900 » et s'est poursuivi dans une série ininterrompue de travaux à l'Université de Lausanne¹ – un déplacement qui nous paraît s'imposer pour formuler une méthodologie historique en matière de « cinéma ».

Ce déplacement n'est pas exclusif, il dessine un tracé différent mais qui inclut toutes les recherches spécifiques menées qu'elles se réclament de l'histoire du cinéma, de la « nouvelle histoire du cinéma » ou de l'« archéologie des médias ». Il ne rejette aucune classification empirique (celles-ci sont toutes objet de réflexion et d'histoire, elles désignent des usages, des partages de compétence, elles cristallisent des stratégies industrielles, commerciales, de recherche, etc.), mais il permet d'appréhender les différenciations technologiques, sociales, les fonctionnalités diverses qui se développent au sein des dispositifs de vision et d'audition en procédant à d'autres découpages dans le champ des savoirs et des pratiques que ceux que l'on reçoit « tout faits ».

Le « cinéma », en raison de sa nature hétérogène – qu'avait en partie pointée Gilbert Cohen-Séat avec sa distinction entre « fait cinématographique » et « fait filmique » – ne cesse d'être reconfiguré par les historiens, les sémiologues, les esthéticiens (l'histoire de l'histoire du cinéma, celle des théories du cinéma, etc. sont en bonne partie l'histoire de ces réorganisations) tant du fait filmique et de son « noyau », le « cinéma », que du fait cinématographique. D'où les « angoissantes » (sic) interrogations de certains de nos collègues : *Fin du cinéma ?*, *Que reste-t-il du cinéma ? Où va le cinéma ? Est-ce encore du cinéma ?* ou leurs affirmations péremptoires : *What Cinema Is*, etc. qui sont autant d'interrogations sur la pérennité ou l'obsolescence de définitions données à un moment donné, dans des circonstances données et pour des finalités données. Le *e*-débat qui se déroula à l'automne 2013 pendant quelques semaines entre les membres de l'association DOMITOR ne s'est pas d'emblée situé dans cette eschatologie navrée mais elle l'a, en quelque sorte, rétro-engagée en situant ces « angoissantes

questions » à l'extrémité opposée de l'arc temporel et historique : le *flip-book* est-il du cinéma ? est-ce déjà du cinéma ? etc., type de questionnement qui rencontre fatalement la spéculation ontologique et le fameux « Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ? » qui innervait toutes les théories et esthétiques du cinéma depuis 1910 – pour le moins.

C'est sur la base de l'approche que nous avons baptisée « épistémologie des dispositifs de vision et d'audition » que nous souhaitons faire ici quelques propositions propres à réélaborer l'objet de l'histoire du cinéma. Plus précisément nous voudrions mettre en place une articulation entre la méthode épistémologique et la question de la définition de l'objet de l'histoire. Cela supposera d'interroger d'une part les liens entre l'acte de faire de l'histoire et l'institution, question qui est au cœur de la définition de la notion de média ; d'autre part de se poser la question de l'écriture de l'histoire en fonction de la définition de son objet.

Partie I. Histoire du cinéma et institution

Le e-débat de cet automne a montré qu'il y a désaccord dans les définitions. Tout débat suppose un enjeu : il s'agit de constituer un savoir de référence sur *ce qu'est* le cinéma ou sur ce qui entre, ou non, dans une définition admise du cinéma. Ce qui sous-tend ce débat est un *discours de fondation*. Ce n'est sans doute pas un hasard si un nouvel échange animé a suivi le premier portant cette fois sur le *nom même* de l'institution DOMITOR. Ce sont là deux facettes de la fonction institutionnelle de l'historien. L'une, en effet, consiste justement à *nommer, définir et circonscrire* l'objet de l'histoire du cinéma – l'autre à nommer l'institution qui réunit ceux qui disent ce qu'est l'objet de l'histoire du cinéma. L'historien peut adopter une position critique à l'encontre de la naturalisation idéalisée de son objet, en rendant compte de son processus d'institutionnalisation. Mais quelle que soit sa démarche, l'historien *dit l'existence historique* de cet objet, et son travail en apporte la « preuve ».

En quoi consiste le travail d'institutionnalisation opéré par l'historien ? Étymologiquement, instituer, *instituer*, c'est fonder, ordonner et régler.

1. *Fonder le cinéma comme objet*, revient à lui assigner un lieu et un moment d'émergence historique, à lui attribuer une identité : c'est le définir par sa naissance, par son devenir, et donc le saisir dans un cadre qui fixe son origine et son existence dans le temps. En le nommant et lui accordant une naissance, l'historien en propose l'*actualisation historique*. De par son écriture même, il *institue*, il *fonde* le « cinéma » en objet. Le cinéma est né en 1895 par/avec l'apparition du/le Cinématographe ; ou : le cinéma est né à partir du moment où il est possible de repérer des « films », c'est l'histoire des œuvres, des mouvements ou des auteurs. Georges Sadoul, dès les années 1930² a mis en évidence ce caractère instituant de l'opération historiographique en déclinant plusieurs possibles « débuts » du cinéma, plusieurs cadres définissant ses conditions de possibilité : le cinéma est né en 1832, ou en 1869 ou en 1895 selon le critère qu'on choisit : image en mouvement, son et image, image photographique (et non graphique), projection, etc. Ce que nous pouvons appeler l'*histoire critique* se met alors en branle, l'histoire qui fait bouger ses cadres et tente un renouvellement de son objet. L'objet de l'histoire du cinéma, en dépit de tous les dénis positiviste et techniciste, se construit dans les discours mêmes des historiens. L'objet cinéma est le produit de l'écriture historique. Qu'elle soit critique ou idéalisée, l'histoire est fondamentalement *performative*, parce qu'elle fonde son objet en le définissant.

2. *Ordonner son existence* : l'histoire, dans sa force instituant, se confronte au temps : elle a à régler un passé avec un présent, voire à postuler un futur ; elle se confronte à la mémoire et à la trace qui sous-tendent la problématique des sources. Ordonner c'est organiser la temporalité et la causalité qui déterminent l'existence de cet

objet « cinéma » dans le temps et dans le rapport à ce qui le détermine dans le champ social, économique, technique, politique et culturel. C'est l'ordre du récit qui plie l'objet de l'histoire au temps humain, avec ses logiques technologiques (enchaînement de brevets), industrielles (logiques de production), géographiques (cinémas nationaux), ou culturelles (cinémas populaires, art et essai, patrimoine) : ce sont les périodisations techno-industrielles (la salle, le parlant, le numérique), la délimitation de mouvements, d'écoles, de modes de production, de modes de diffusion, etc. L'histoire se fonde sur l'ancrage historique de ses sources et elle construit un savoir en l'organisant selon un récit : de ce fait, *l'histoire produit la temporalité de son objet* et cette temporalité renvoie au défilement du temps, à un temps humain comme l'écrit Paul Ricoeur, soit – selon un modèle éprouvé par la tradition – un temps chronologique et finalisé, soit – dans une histoire critique – un temps modelé par des continuités ou articulé par des révolutions et des ruptures, voire un temps capturé à travers des fragments. Même sous forme dysnarrative, le récit est l'ordre de référence.

3. *Régler son utilisation* : le discours historique règle les « énoncés » sur le cinéma et il définit les cadres de leur utilisation : ces énoncés doivent correspondre à la définition fondée par l'historien, et obéir à l'organisation d'un devenir historique. Le discours historique règle ce que l'on peut ou ne peut pas dire. Par exemple, on ne peut pas dire, jusqu'à nouvel ordre : le « cinématographe de Bergson » *est un objet de l'histoire du cinéma* au même titre que le Cinématographe Lumière. S'il fait partie des références essentielles pour le cinéma d'un point de vue théorique au XX^e siècle, le « cinématographe de Bergson »³ n'est pas décrit dans les livres d'histoire du cinéma. Le discours historique règle aussi le droit à la parole historique : autant une histoire critique se permettra d'aller chercher dans d'autres écritures le modèle – comme de Certeau le fait avec Freud,⁴ autant une posture figée tentera d'opposer le discours historique dans sa spécificité idéalisée aux autres systèmes de savoir. Mais quoi qu'il en soit, le discours historique définit le statut de son énonciation institutionnelle. Ce sont là les trois actes instituant internes à la démarche historique.

Cependant l'historien met en jeu son objet dans l'espace socio-économique. Il le fait entrer dans le symbolique, le rend échangeable, dans les discours – on en parle, on le nomme, on le fête –, mais aussi dans le système économique – on le finance, on le négocie dans les accords internationaux, etc. Dans cette perspective institutionnelle, il faut, au mieux, le *monumentaliser* : c'est-à-dire faire augmenter sa valeur d'échange, ce qui permettra d'attirer des capitaux, pour la production aussi bien que pour les études. D'où le besoin d'événements symboliques. D'où la nécessité sociale de la naissance fondatrice et de l'histoire identitaire ontologisante facilement lisibles. L'historien n'est pas seulement engagé dans un combat pour le savoir historique : sa démarche est prise dans un mouvement d'institutionnalisation comme *nécessité interne à sa démarche* (fonder, ordonner, régler), et comme *nécessité externe* : imposer son objet dans l'espace socio-économique.

Partie II. Médias, cinéma

L'historiographie devrait permettre d'établir combien chaque historien a été conduit à construire implicitement ou explicitement un cadre susceptible de recevoir les objets qualifiés pour figurer dans une histoire du cinéma et combien la multiplication, très tôt, de ces histoires peut témoigner des nécessités de reconfigurer sans cesse le cadre pour y faire entrer de nouveaux objets soit qu'ils aient gagné une respectabilité qu'on leur déniait auparavant, soit qu'ils y soient entrés pour des raisons géographiques ou nationales ou encore techniques ou commerciales. Car les discours historiques dont on vient d'évoquer la dimension institutionnelle confrontent aussi leur logique instituante aux remaniements continuels des objets techniques de vision et d'audition auxquels ils ont affaire, remaniements inhérents à leur nature même d'objets techniques (apparition de nouveaux appareils,

changements de supports, de mode de diffusion, d'usages, bouleversement des frontières public/privé, professionnel/amateur, etc.), leur multiplication.

Il est ainsi apporté régulièrement des réponses académiques redéfinissant l'objet « cinéma » en fonction de ces transformations fonctionnant par re-nominations, élargissements, requalifications, re-hiérarchisations. Pour en rester à l'après Deuxième Guerre mondiale, la filmologie a répondu au modèle esthétique élaboré dans les années 1920, en recourant à la sociologie des communications de masses qu'elle a ensuite « dépassée » en décentrant le cinéma pour le situer au sein des mass-media (en particulier la télévision) ;⁵ la sémiologie a opéré ensuite un retour au noyau filmique mais à travers la problématique du langage et des codes, avant que la « nouvelle histoire » n'introduise à nouveau la multiplicité et la relativité des formes narratives, énonciatives en déployant une complexité et une hétérogénéité « native » du « cinéma » ouvrant à la problématique de l'intermédialité. Comme discours historique elle s'est construite en opposition à un modèle qu'elle a intitulé « histoire traditionnelle », récusant sa soumission à une vision évolutionniste, au récit linéaire et continu, au nom de la complexité à laquelle elle s'est trouvée confrontée. Néanmoins la « nouvelle histoire » n'en a pas moins élaboré des périodisations scandées par le modèle de la « double naissance » ou distingué des modalités successives (attraction/narration, monstration/narration) qui se sont quelque peu figées en particulier dans ses déclinaisons/applications scolaires.

De nos jours une « archéologie des médias » – où média est pris dans un sens étendu et suivant la tradition anglo-saxonne des « *media-studies* », délié de « mass » et de l'approche proprement sociologique – doit-elle se substituer à la formule – exténuée, y compris après sa phase « premiers temps » et « intermédiaire » – de l'histoire du cinéma ? La catégorie de « média » domine à tel point le monde anglo-saxon que lorsque nous publions nos propres travaux sur les « dispositifs » en anglais nous devons entrer, pour être identifiés institutionnellement, sous la rubrique « épistémologie des médias ». Et pourtant...

La notion de média, dans le sens extensif du terme, est-elle la solution pour appréhender la diversité et les évolutions des moyens de communication et des dispositifs de vision et d'audition ? Sans même parler de son singulier, medium, qui traduit plutôt un resserrement sur la spécificité du cinéma (Lewis Jacob, *the Movies as Medium* à l'égal de la peinture) et sa dimension de moyen d'expression, le mot a plusieurs acceptions selon qu'on le réserve à ce qui a été *socialement institué comme média* – que ce soit à partir des principes instituant qu'impose l'écriture historique et que « média » partage avec « cinéma » ou que ce soit par le processus d'institution socio-économique, par l'industrie, le commerce, le discours public –, ou qu'on l'étende au-delà pour en faire un outil quasi universel, menacé dès lors de fonctionner comme *une métaphore plutôt qu'en tant que concept*. Ainsi la médiologie a-t-elle arraisonné toutes sortes d'objets au titre de média telles que la route ou la bicyclette par exemple – comme, après elle, la théorie des « appareils » autour de Jean-Louis Déotte. C'est une direction qu'avait indiquée et même engagée Marshall MacLuhan qui énumérait toute une série d'appareils, de machines, d'objets au titre de médias qu'on retrouva plus tard chez d'autres théoriciens : gramophone, machine à écrire, typographie, radio, etc. On ne peut évidemment faire l'économie de l'articulation entre média et médiation, car c'est ce dernier terme qui permet cet usage extensif de la notion de média (tout ce qui relie). A cet égard on parlera d'un « espace de médiation » comme le fait Gilbert Simondon pour l'objet technique,⁶ un *milieu*,⁷ ce qui permettra d'échapper à cet usage métaphorique du terme de média.

Dans le domaine qui est le nôtre, la télévision et le cinéma entrent sans difficulté dans la catégorie des *médias institués*. Mais peut-on considérer rétrospectivement la lanterne magique comme un média en raison de la généralisation de son emploi et son ancrage dans différentes pratiques spectaculaires, didactiques, scientifiques, etc. ? Sans doute. C'est d'ailleurs ce qui s'est fait. Par contre, il paraît difficile d'utiliser ce terme à propos du phénakistiscope ou du kaléidoscope qui pourtant intéressent l'historien du cinéma voire l'historien des médias, car ce sont des dispositifs de vision. De même que le radar, au croisement des technologies radio (ondes courtes,

antennes, émetteur) et de l'imagerie, n'est pas classé dans les médias, ni le sonar, ni, aujourd'hui, les dispositifs optiques et/ou sonores appartenant à l'imagerie médicale comme l'échographe, les divers endoscopes, etc., ou le vaste domaine des simulateurs dans la technologie militaire. Cela bien que ces technologies – dont on a pu montrer combien elles entrent en interaction de manière structurelle avec des médias tels que le cinéma ou la télévision (voir Paul Virilio puis Friedrich Kittler) – s'utilisent en dehors de leur champ strict d'application, notamment dans l'art contemporain (Mona Hatoum pour l'endoscopie) et au cinéma (Harun Farocki).

Les médias institutionnalisés sont entièrement identifiables, repérables et délimités, comme l'objet de l'histoire du cinéma est fondé, ordonné et réglé dans son existence historique : les naissances, les récits et les fragments multiples ne permettent pas d'échapper à l'institution.

« L'archéologie des médias » s'est d'abord définie comme histoire des exclus de l'histoire (selon le topos de l'histoire des vaincus benjaminienne), visant à institutionnaliser à leur tour des médias oubliés. Ce faisant elle ne sortait pas de l'approche d'entités données comme telles auxquelles elles octroyait un nouveau statut. Même quand on donne (Cf. Jussi Parikka notamment) une définition plus labile de l'archéologie des médias, se revendiquant de la notion de théorie errante ou voyageuse⁸ et surtout s'efforçant de relier cette théorie à la pratique artistique dans le domaine des médias, donnant aussi vitalité à la notion de « médias imaginaires »,⁹ comme pour les médias marginaux, négligés, on a affaire à des objets donnés comme tels et non à des schèmes susceptibles d'appréhender divers types d'objets empiriques (sans préjuger de leur nature de « médias » ou non), donnés à partir d'un schéma abstrait qui, d'une part, rend compte de leur fonctionnement (dispositif), d'autre part, les inscrivent dans des ensembles transversaux et englobants (des *épistémès*).¹⁰

Enfin l'attention aux discours de différents niveaux qui « parlent » ces objets permet de les appréhender mieux que la seule considération de l'auto-définition qu'ils se donnent et la reconnaissance institutionnelle qui accrédite ou suscite cette auto-définition.

Ainsi si l'on prend tel article en « une » du *Petit Journal* de 1908 (« Le cinéma et l'histoire »), telle controverse à l'Académie des sciences (sur l'invention du cinéma), telle prospective du « cinéma de demain » (Moussinac envisageant, en 1926, la suppression du support physique de l'image en mouvement et sa transmission par ondes radio), on peut observer le caractère mouvant, en mouvement, des frontières de l'objet et on est amené à le reconfigurer en prenant en compte sa nature d'assemblage, d'agencement, conjuguant à la fois ce pluralisme constitutif (qui l'inscrit toujours simultanément dans plusieurs champs) et cette homogénéisation qui – dit Simondon – conduit à l'individuation de l'objet technique en fonction de la réponse qu'il donne à des usages et à des attentes.

Cependant cette dualité, ce double mouvement de dispersion/hétérogénéité et de centrage/homogénéité de l'objet technique se rejoue constamment. Il en va de même pour le média dont la base et la définition techniques n'est qu'un aspect. Les stabilisations homogènes sont caractéristiques des « moments » institutionnels (on crée « la » télévision comme média : l'Etat l'encadre, la suscite, l'utilise, une industrie se développe – aux deux pôles de la production et de la réception). On ne parlera donc pas de naissance (ni de re-naissance) mais de moments ou de situations. La problématique de la naissance – dont on a déjà dit et redit les équivoques anthropologiques que son modèle emporte – oblitère à la fois les multiplicités qui se croisent dans la mise en place d'un média (gramophone + chronophotographie ; radio + cinéma) en les plaçant *nolens volens* dans une origine qui se subsume dans la « mise au monde », et réprime cette pluralité en accréditant un choix industriel qui – Sadoul le relevait dans ses premiers textes d'historien – peut parfaitement *appauvrir* un prototype au regard de finalités commerciales – commodité de fabrication, de transport, rentabilité de production et de circulation, etc. (cas de la couleur et du son en particulier).

Cette mise à distance prévient en outre les mirages circonstanciels dus à la pression de mutations techniques : en 1997, on a pu dire (Kittler) que le numérique traitant tout phénomène par le nombre, le chiffre (auquel

« rien n'est impossible » [sic]), tout medium pouvait désormais être transcrit dans un autre, tout devenait équivalent, qu'il n'y avait plus qu'un interprétant ;¹¹ peu après on a pu lire sous d'autres plumes (Couchot) que la réalité disparaissait devant la possibilité de créer par ordinateur une réalité simulée, virtuelle, etc.

Les limites de la notion de média peuvent donc avoir deux sens :

1. L'inefficacité de la notion en raison de sa définition flottante, sans cesse remaniée et le fait que sans cesse apparaissent dans ses marges, bords, ce qui échappe à la notion de média. Il est des dispositifs qui ne sont pas média, la notion de média ne permettant pas d'embrasser un certain nombre de phénomènes, de techniques, d'institutions de vision et/ou d'audition ;
2. Dans la logique du média, il y a forcément la logique de l'institution. Et toute institution suppose des actes symboliques qui la fondent et qui fondent l'objet sur lequel elle porte, l'objet qu'elle définit, qu'elle délimite, comme l'histoire de l'objet qu'elle fait émerger et se transformer dans le temps. Donc, la logique du média impose les actes symboliques, les anniversaires, des naissances. La logique du média comme institution ne peut être celle d'une démarche qui cherche le renouvellement de l'objet du cinéma.

Une acception plus large du terme permet-elle d'éviter ces impasses ? Ce serait à condition de gagner une définition conceptuelle, de devenir un « schème épistémique » propre à permettre de développer une méthodologie analytique – comme celle que nous proposons avec notre définition de « dispositif ».

Partie III. Renouveau de l'objet de l'histoire du cinéma par l'épistémologie des dispositifs

La multiplication des définitions appartient pleinement à l'approche épistémologique. La *pluralité* est une première manière de contrer les modèles idéalistes, ontologiques traditionnels. C'est bien dans ce sens que Michel de Certeau ou Michel Foucault, pour l'archéologie, tentent de redéfinir la démarche historique. Mais en quoi consiste la pluralité de l'histoire ? Est-elle du côté d'une multiplication des naissances ou d'une juxtaposition de récits évolutifs de différents médias ? En somme, est-ce que le multiple suffit à sortir du schème institutionnalisant de l'origine fondatrice de l'objet et du récit ?

La première réponse que l'on peut faire est négative : les catégories de « naissance » et de « récit » sont bien présentes malgré le pluriel et reconduisent les schèmes organisateurs de l'histoire institutionnalisante. En fait, l'essentiel gît dans la redéfinition de l'organisation des pluralités : dans la capacité à trouver un mode de repérage et de réorganisation de la pluralité qui ne soit ni celui de la naissance ni celui du récit temporel institutionnalisant. En ce qui nous concerne, cette réorganisation passe par une méthode : l'épistémologie des dispositifs de vision. Celle-ci permet d'apporter une nouvelle forme de cohérence, autre que le récit. Celle de *configuration*. Nous avons eu l'occasion à plusieurs reprises d'explicitier ce que l'on peut entendre par une épistémologie des dispositifs de vision. Ressaisissons quelques fils qui nous seront utiles. De quoi parlons-nous lorsque nous disons « dispositif de vision et d'audition » ? Nous pourrions bien sûr désigner ce que la théorie des années 1970 dite, en anglais, de l'*Apparatus Theory* a analysé à travers une critique de l'idéologie, qui fondait la mise en évidence d'un spectateur leurré soit sur l'analyse des aspects techniques et esthétiques de l'appareillage cinématographique, soit à partir d'une grille d'inspiration psychanalytique. Nous pourrions aussi reprendre littéralement le terme de dispositif pour désigner, avec Foucault, des « dispositifs de pouvoir ». Et certainement ces deux acceptions font partie de ce que nous visons comme dispositifs, mais elles ne sont certes pas les seules. Elles imposent surtout d'associer *dispositif* à une dimension qu'il nous importe, au contraire, de *suspendre* : il faut pouvoir analyser les dispositifs de vision sans impliquer d'entrée de jeu les effets idéologiques et de pouvoir qu'ils sont susceptibles de produire, quitte à les réintroduire si l'analyse des sources l'exige. On ne cerne pas l'objet de l'histoire du cinéma en déroulant l'histoire d'un dispositif idéologique ou de pouvoir qui aurait

dès lors une identité, une origine (la caverne de Platon) et une évolution jusqu'à nos jours, une permanence d'essence au gré de ses manifestations. On manquerait tout aspect des dispositifs qui résiste à la lunette idéologique.¹² Par exemple, un fait technique essentiel du cinématographe, l'arrêt intermittent de la bande, ne saurait s'expliquer sur les bases de la théorie des années 1970. Il nous fallait une notion qui puisse embrasser plus d'acceptions du mot *dispositif*, plus de dispositifs, il fallait revenir au cœur de ce qui définit un *dispositif* : la dimension *d'assemblage* qui renvoie aussi bien à l'acception technique de dispositif, synonyme d'appareil, qu'à l'acception socio-économique, pour rendre compte de ce qui s'instaure dans un assemblage particulier : un spectateur et une représentation à travers une machinerie. Ainsi, à propos de la technicité de l'objet *cinéma*, on peut suivre l'analyse de l'objet technique de Simondon qui vise à lui accorder une identité sur la base de son homogénéité et de sa cohérence interne, notamment en tant qu'assemblage d'assemblages. L'approche *en dispositif* englobe : 1. cette identification (individualisation) que Simondon inscrit dans une problématique plus vaste impliquant la définition de la fonction, la relation au milieu, aux autres machines ou aux usages, ce qu'il appelle espace de médiation. Mais aussi : 2. la mise en évidence des catégories abstraites qui les traversent, qui façonnent la question dont ils sont une des réponses possibles. Ainsi transmettre à distance, conserver la durée, répéter un événement, etc. 3. L'approche en dispositif insère ce réseau dans des assemblages plus vastes, ce que Deleuze appelle, par exemple, la « machine sociale ou collective », « l'agencement [...] qui va déterminer ce qui est élément technique à tel moment, quels en sont l'usage, l'extension, la compréhension, etc. ».¹³

En somme, la définition de la notion de *dispositif* implique non seulement la question de l'*objet* mais celle de la *méthode* capable de mettre en évidence tous ces niveaux d'agencement, capable d'articuler la définition des dispositifs concrets à une reconstruction de nature épistémologique, une *configuration* (un schème) : cette méthode se fonde sur un rapport direct aux sources discursives et non-discursives – elle partage cela avec l'histoire –, mais procède à la réélaboration, à partir de ces sources, des relations entre les trois termes de spectateur, représentation et machinerie, par l'explicitation des pratiques, des théories, des concepts, des figures qui sont à l'œuvre dans les discours à propos des dispositifs. Ce réseau de *relations* entre des notions, des « énoncés », des pratiques fonde les conditions de possibilité (historique) des dispositifs et, en retour, ces dispositifs modélisent des énoncés liés à la visualité, la médialité, l'intermédialité, voire aux codes/formes de pensée d'une époque. C'est ce réseau de relations que nous entendons par *configuration*.

Pour nous, la notion de dispositif ne se comprend pas sans la méthode spécifique que nous disons « épistémologique ». Mais non pas au sens anglais d'« epistemology ». Celui-ci – ce sont les aléas de la traduction – est employé dans un sens beaucoup plus large, intégrant ce que le français désigne par « théorie de la connaissance », et qui trouve de multiples formes dans l'histoire de la philosophie, de Platon à Merleau-Ponty, par exemple. La question est maintenant de savoir comment la méthode épistémologique que nous revendiquons traite son objet et comment celui-ci peut être utile à l'historien. Mais pour commencer est-il même un objet unique, délimité, individualisé dans l'épistémologie des dispositifs ? Certainement pas, car la méthode conduit à *désubstantialiser son propre objet*. Dans cette méthode, *dispositif* renvoie à trois états de « l'objet » dispositif :

1. Le *dispositif repérable* « de prime abord » dans une source, celui qui suscite l'idée de son étude, objet empirique, concret ou imaginaire. Les chronophotographes de Marey, les salles Pathé dans les années 1930, le cinématographe de Bergson ; mais aussi le dispositif qui n'est pas forcément déterminé institutionnellement : n'importe quel dispositif mettant en place un spectateur, par exemple, l'échographe dont nous avons déjà parlé.¹⁴
2. Le *dispositif comme grille de lecture*, tel que reformulé théoriquement et de manière généralisable à travers trois questions : comment se définissent respectivement le spectateur, la représentation et la machinerie dans les sources qui nous concernent en rapport avec des pratiques, des concepts et des usages sociaux ? La grille d'analyse produit le dispositif tel qu'il *n'existe pas*.¹⁵ Elle est, par définition, ouverte : par exemple, à la place

du spectateur, elle peut faire advenir un utilisateur et celui-ci peut tout aussi bien être défini par d'autres sens que la vision : le toucher, l'odorat par exemple, pour autant que les sources en témoignent. L'objet à construire est donc fonction des discours qu'il s'agit de croiser à travers la grille dispositifs.

3. Le *dispositif comme configuration*, tel qu'il est réélaboré pour le travail de mise en relation de techniques, de théories, de pratiques, de formes, en somme, n'est plus un « objet » indentifiable, mais un objet à construire, saisi à travers un réseau de relations, une configuration qui échappe à la nomination et à la délimitation d'un objet concret ; une configuration qui ne s'ordonne pas selon l'axe du passage du temps, mais selon un réseau de relations dans la synchronie d'un cadre temporel. On peut en rendre compte, non pas en racontant dans le temps, mais en repérant des relations à un moment historique donné. Le concept en est le principe et non le récit. La configuration échappe au temps continu d'une causalité ordonnée, linéaire, voire dialectique ou fragmentaire ; elle relève de la radiographie momentanée d'une disposition où tel dispositif empirique, avec d'autres dispositifs concrets, se trouve situés et déterminés. Différentes configurations peuvent coexister, se chevaucher : un objet empirique peut alors appartenir à plusieurs schèmes explicatifs.

Il ne s'agit pas de confusion de niveaux, mais bien de trois états de « l'objet » absolument nécessaires dans un processus dynamique d'analyse épistémologique. La pluralité de l'objet de l'épistémologie des dispositifs ne renvoie plus ici à la prolifération de cas empiriques que l'historien éclairé devrait refuser d'enfermer dans son récit téléologique, mais à ce que produit la méthode : un *objet-méthode*. Les cas de dispositifs empiriques ne sont pas alors situés dans le temps comme séries, comme des générations avec leur origine, pas plus qu'ils ne sont présentés comme des fragments autonomes, éclats brillants et féconds de l'histoire. Ils sont impliqués dans des configurations dont le concept est la raison, au sens de Bachelard.

Certes l'épistémologie se confronte au temps comme tout discours historique et méthodologique : d'une part parce que la temporalité définit l'ancrage temporel des sources, d'autre part, parce qu'elle situe sa méthode et son énonciation en référence à un corps de méthodes situées dans le temps. Et, à ce titre, elle peut devenir elle-même objet d'histoire.

Mais dans la construction de son objet, en tant que configuration, ce n'est plus le temps qui ordonne, mais le concept. L'épistémologie des dispositifs relègue le temps comme durée, comme développement, au statut de donnée indirecte : soit en ce qu'elle dessine un ensemble de *simultanéités*, de configurations qui se chevauchent à un moment historique donné ; soit parce que le passage du temps n'est que déduit des transformations, des changements de places et des modification de relations qui dessinent les configurations de dispositifs. Ainsi par exemple l'idée de *mouvement continu* peut être prise dans des configurations diverses, être un concept différent, s'il entre dans un schème que l'on dira, pour aller vite, bergsonien, ou s'il s'inscrit dans celui de l'expérimentation du mouvement scientifique ou ludique au XIX^e siècle. Parce qu'elle n'exclut pas le temps mais qu'elle l'implique à sa façon, l'épistémologie des dispositifs peut être définie comme *épistémologie historique*.

A-t-on saisi maintenant en quoi elle peut se mettre au service de l'historien ? Elle est l'outil qui permet de travailler à la limite de l'institution historique du cinéma ou du média et de renouveler la définition de son objet en contournant l'ordre institutionnel du média : pas de restrictions à l'endroit des sources analysées, pas de définitions préalables définitives des dispositifs. Les objets empiriques prennent sens de leur intégration à des configurations qui les dépassent. Ainsi, d'une part, l'épistémologie des dispositifs permet d'appréhender autrement des objets empiriques déjà organisés dans un récit historique institutionnalisant et de les articuler à partir d'une autre cohérence : par exemple, Eisenstein, écrivant le projet d'une « Histoire générale du cinéma » à partir d'assemblages qui échappent à l'histoire-récit.¹⁶ D'autre part, elle permet de faire apparaître et de donner sens à des objets empiriques, des techniques, des pratiques, des usages ignorés du discours historique. C'est l'exemple du « cinématographe de Bergson ». L'épistémologie fait apparaître ce dispositif au cœur d'une pratique discursive de la technique, qui ne sert pas à enregistrer des images ou à les projeter, mais à produire un modèle du

fonctionnement de la pensée. C'est dans ce sens qu'on peut prétendre en faire un objet de l'histoire du cinéma, comme le dispositif Lumière mais à sa manière.

L'épistémologie des dispositifs de vision saisit le cinéma dans la variabilité de ses dispositifs concrets. Si l'on peut dire que le cinéma comme media est un « dispositif cristallisé » en institution, la fonction de l'épistémologie des dispositifs est d'introduire du mouvement entre les atomes du cristal.

Notes

¹ François Albera, Maria Tortajada, *L'Épistémè 1900*, dans André Gaudreault, Catherine Russell, Pierre Véronneau (sous la direction de), *La Cinématographie, nouvelle technologie du XX^e siècle / The Cinema, A New Technology for the 20th Century*, Payot, Lausanne 2004 ; François Albera, Maria Tortajada (sous la direction de), *Cinema Beyond Film. Media Epistemology in the Modern Era*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2010 ; Id., *Ciné-dispositifs. Spectacles, cinéma, télévision, littérature*, L'Âge d'Homme, Lausanne 2011 ; Id., *Cine-dispositives*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2014 ; Laurent Guido, Olivier Lugon (sous la direction de), *Fixe/animé*, L'Âge d'Homme, Lausanne 2010 ; Olivier Lugon (sous la direction de), *Exposition et médias : photographie, cinéma et télévision*, L'Âge d'Homme, Lausanne 2012 ; François Albera, *First Discourses on Film and the construction of a "Cinematic Episteme"*, dans André Gaudreault, Nicolas Dulac, Santiago Hidalgo (sous la direction de), *A Companion to Early Cinema*, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden-Oxford 2012. Ainsi qu'un certain nombre de thèses soutenues ou en cours (notamment Mireille Berton, *Pour une histoire croisée des dispositifs audiovisuels et des sciences du psychisme autour de 1900. La construction du spectateur cinématographique* ; Séverine Graff, *Histoire discursive du «cinéma-vérité» : techniques, controverses, historiographie (1960-1970)*).

² Voir François Albera, « Trois intrigues de Georges Sadoul », dans *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 21, n° 2-3, printemps 2011.

³ Maria Tortajada, « Technique/Discours : quand Bergson inventa son cinématographe », dans *1895 : revue d'histoire du cinéma*, n° 73, été 2014.

⁴ Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1986.

⁵ Voir François Albera, Martin Lefebvre (sous la direction de), « La Filmologie, de nouveau », dans *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 19, n° 2-3, printemps 2009.

⁶ Simondon insiste sur le fait qu'en dépit de l'importance de la « logique interne », l'« auto-corrélation » sans laquelle les objets techniques ne pourraient exister, elle se distingue du couplage relationnel dans lequel ils entrent (que Leroi-Gourhan a identifié et défini pour chaque outil : fonction de prolongement de la pince à long bec, fonction de transformation du bras de levier de la pince, fonction d'isolement de la pince gainée), la médiation opérée par l'outil : « Ce n'est pas *chaque objet* créé qu'il faut considérer à part des autres, mais *l'univers de médiation* qu'ils forment et en lequel chacun sert partiellement de moyen aux autres ».

⁷ En français plutôt que l'« interprétant » général *media* comme en anglais, on connaît diverses catégories liées à cette problématique du lien, du milieu, du support, de l'intermédiaire, de l'articulation, de la relation. Medium est spécifié comme moyen d'expression, « langage », media s'est vu réservé aux moyens de communication et d'information. Il faudrait revenir à des dénominations différentes – notamment celle de milieu, de médiation – pour retrouver la polysémie de « média » mais du même

Une épistémologie des dispositifs pour repenser les limites de la notion de média

coup cette diversification est l'indice de problématiques différentes que celles qui ont cours en allemand (*Medienwissenschaft*) ou en anglais (*archeology of medias*).

* Parikka propose de passer par le « non-humain », l'animal (les insectes, les virus) pour définir les médias ; en ce sens, il va dans le sens d'une inscription d'un phénomène donné dans un autre cadre épistémique que celui auquel il est associé par le sens commun, néanmoins il laisse les objets pré-définis comme médias dans leur intégrité (voir *Digital Contagions: A Media Archaeology of Computer Viruses*, Peter Lang, New York 2007).

⁹ Cf. notre *Projected Cinema An Hypothesis on the Cinema's Imagination*, dans *Cinema Beyond Film*, cit.

¹⁰ Cf. Michel Serres : « A quoi se référerait-on pour classer le savoir et, par là, jouir d'une certaine domination ? Essentiellement à la nature de ses objets. [...] L'objet n'est pas, à la rigueur, pré-donné à la science : au contraire, c'est elle qui le livre et le délivre indéfiniment. Il est l'horizon du savoir et non la référence initiale de son exercice. *L'objet est projet*, La vision d'essence définit un état zéro, nu et naïf, de la pensée non travaillée ». (*Hermès II : L'interférence*, Minuit, Paris 1974).

¹¹ Pourtant de ce que le son, transcrit photographiquement sur la pellicule devint une image, une trace visuelle – on l'a appelé « son optique » –, nul n'avait songé à tirer que l'image était devenue le « chiffre » absolu !

¹² Le dernier ouvrage de Jonathan Crary, *24/7 : Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, Verso, London-New York 2013 est un bon exemple de la démarche inverse qui n'envisage les dispositifs médiatiques qu'à partir des « champs d'opérations et de réquisits » de la surveillance, du contrôle et de l'exploitation et invalide toute autre approche.

¹³ « ...le principe de toute technologie est de montrer qu'un élément technique reste abstrait, tout à fait indéterminé, tant qu'on ne le rapporte pas à un agencement qu'il suppose. Ce qui est premier par rapport à l'élément technique, c'est la machine : non pas la machine technique, qui est elle-même un ensemble d'éléments, mais la machine sociale ou collective, l'agencement machinique qui va déterminer ce qui est élément technique à tel moment, quels en sont l'usage, l'extension, la compréhension..., etc. » Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux*, Minuit, Paris 1980, p. 495.

¹⁴ Il comporte une sonde, permettant l'émission et la réception d'ultrasons ; un système informatique, transformant le délai entre la réception et l'émission de l'ultrason en image ; une console de commande, permettant la saisie des données du patient et les différents réglages ; un système de visualisation : le moniteur ; un système d'enregistrement des données, soit analogique (cassette vidéo, impression papier), soit de numérique. C'est un dispositif de vision et d'audition qui s'impose à l'épistémologie.

¹⁵ Cf. François Albera, Maria Tortajada, *Le Dispositif n'existe pas !*, dans *Ciné-dispositifs*, cit.

¹⁶ Alors qu'il occupe une situation institutionnelle par excellence : l'Académie des sciences de l'URSS, dans le cadre d'une commande – engager une histoire du cinéma collective et une dizaine de volumes (voir ses *Notes pour une Histoire générale du cinéma*, AFRHC, Paris 2013).

Quelles perspectives pour l'historiographie du cinéma ?

L'histoire est constamment réécrite [...]. Chaque époque, avec sa principale tendance, se l'approprie et reporte sur elle ses propres courants de pensée.¹

Leopold von Ranke

Dans son livre *De l'Histoire du cinéma*,² paru en 1992, l'historienne Michèle Lagny se pose la question « Pourquoi et comment fait-on l'histoire du cinéma ? » Question inspirée par des générations d'historiens avant elle, qui se sont interrogés sur leur travail. Depuis que l'écriture de l'histoire des sociétés a été reconnue comme discipline, on a cherché à déterminer sa raison d'être, ses méthodes et techniques, ses champs de travail et ses sujets, ses racines, ses transformations et ses objectifs, sans oublier son avenir et ses rapports avec d'autres disciplines.

Se poser cette question à l'intérieur du champ des études cinématographiques qui a pu célébrer, il y a vingt ans environ, le centenaire de sa « naissance », permet de réfléchir sur les résultats et les acquis des recherches menées dans le domaine. Étant donné que de nombreux collègues ont déjà essayé de donner une réponse à la question posée par Lagny,³ nous nous sommes concentrés à nous demander s'il y existe des aspects que l'étude du cinéma voire de la cinématographie aurait produit d'original, peut-être d'unique au cours de ses 120 ans d'existence.

Pour ceci nous aborderons les points suivants :

1. La prolifération du terme ou : *A chacun sa propre conception du mot « histoire » ?*
2. Le nucleus de l'historiographie cinématographique ou : *Qu'est-ce que le « propre » de l'histoire du cinéma ?*
3. Réflexions sur le travail du chercheur ou : *Quels instruments et méthodes pour l'historiographie du cinéma ?*
4. Nouvelles perspectives ou : *Quel avenir pour l'historiographie du cinéma ?⁴*

Avant de commencer nos réflexions, il faut peut-être introduire une petite parenthèse concernant la terminologie, notamment quand on passe d'une langue à l'autre. Quiconque a essayé de traduire les premiers chapitres de *Langage et cinéma* de Christian Metz dans une langue non romane, s'est vite heurté à l'impossibilité de reprendre les différents exemples donnés pour illustrer le fonctionnement des mots « film » et « cinéma ». Par ailleurs, selon un usage récent, le terme « *Cinema History* » est dans une relation pour ainsi dire antagoniste avec celui de « *Film History* » et n'est donc très certainement pas une traduction adéquate de l'expression fran-

çaise « histoire du cinéma ».⁵ Les termes de « film » et de « cinéma » désignent par ailleurs une multitude de facettes, de pratiques, de formes ce qui, en effet, rend difficile, voire impossible, une approche historienne tenant compte de tout à la fois. Nous nous concentrerons par la suite sur une histoire du cinéma centrée autour des films, tout en sachant que cela ne couvre pas la totalité des questions que les historiens pourraient poser au passé cinématographique.⁶

L'état de la question 1 : A chacune et chacun sa propre conception du mot « histoire » au XXI^e siècle ?

« Le cinéma sera le théâtre, l'école et le journal de demain ». Cette célèbre phrase attribuée à Charles Pathé⁷ ainsi que la réflexion de Boleslas Matuszewski sur le film comme éducateur, « facilité nouvelle des communications » et « source de l'histoire »⁸ nous amène directement à un « potentiel » de notre objet de recherche : ce que nous appellerons la « polyvalence » du film. Cette polyvalence reconnue avant 1900 ouvre le champ de recherche dès le début.

Le film est une sorte de caméléon qui prend la « couleur » du contexte social dans lequel il est placé, c'est-à-dire qu'il s'adapte aux questions que l'on pose, que cela soit au niveau commercial, culturel, distractif, documentaire, industriel, pédagogique, etc. Et il s'adapte également aux questions historiques qu'on lui pose.

Prenons un exemple spécifique : l'étude par ailleurs très riche de Barbara Flückiger, historienne des technologies de l'image et du son, intitulée « Material properties of historical film in the digital age ». En distinguant entre le film en tant que texte (*film as conceptual object*), le film lors de sa présentation (*film as a performative instance in projection*) et le film en tant qu'objet matériel (*film as a material object*), elle analyse par la suite cette matérialité dans ses rapports historiques avec l'homme et le mécanisme de la perception humaine, puis dans le contexte du laboratoire, et finalement elle interroge son existence d'objet palpable. Cela l'amène à parler par la suite de trois histoires différentes de « l'objet film » :⁹

- a. l'histoire de la production du film comme support (sa phase de genèse comme porteur d'information) ;
- b. l'histoire du traitement et de la manipulation du film au laboratoire (sa phase de post-production) ;
- c. l'histoire de l'influence du contexte sur l'état du film (il faudrait plus correctement dire : de la copie) (sa phase de diffusion et d'archivage).

Il s'agit en principe d'un objet considéré à partir de trois points de vue différents. Elle en aurait certainement pu écrire d'autres histoires encore, si elle avait pris en considération les deux points qu'elle mentionne également, à savoir le film en tant que texte et dans le contexte de la projection. Flückiger se situe du côté du travail archivistique, traitant de trois facettes de l'objet matériel pour comprendre comment celui-ci est devenu tel qu'il est aujourd'hui. Qu'on nous comprenne bien : il ne s'agit nullement de mettre en doute la légitimité de cette approche de l'objet matériel auquel doit faire face le chercheur. Tout au contraire, Flückiger pose des questions importantes et utiles, surtout à une époque où la pellicule est successivement et probablement irrémédiablement remplacée par le numérique.

Ce qui nous a intrigué dans le contexte de ses réflexions, c'est plutôt l'utilisation du terme « histoire ». Depuis les premiers « historio-graphistes » de la cinématographie avant 1914, ce mot a été utilisé en relation à un nombre croissant de sujets et de perspectives de recherche. L'Histoire préparait le chemin. Dans son *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie* (Manuel sur la méthode historique et de la philosophie de l'histoire) de 1889 Ernst Bernheim définit l'histoire comme la connaissance de « ce qui se passe et ce qui s'est passé, ainsi que [...] la narration des événements, sans limitation quelconque à un terrain spécifique ».¹⁰ Plus tard François Dosse, en parlant des conséquences du travail de l'École des Annales, constate que « l'historiographie [...] a éclaté [...] l'heure est aux *micro-histoires* ».¹¹ Faudrait-il, en ce qui concerne les différentes

histoires évoquées par Flückiger, dire qu'en qui concerne notre discipline, l'heure n'est même plus aux « micro-histoires », mais aux « nano-histoires » ?¹² Elle est, de toute manière, souvent aux analyses de cas et de discours divers, aux questions très pointues concernant des aspects très spécifiques du large terrain que l'on peut rattacher au cinéma, mot pris ici dans le sens le plus large possible. Face à cette situation, Laurent Le Forrestier dans son introduction au numéro de la revue *CiNéMAS* consacré aux procédures historiographiques constate :

*[...] si la discipline « histoire du cinéma » doit se construire sur des réquisits (et l'on ne voit pas pourquoi ils différaient de l'histoire), il revient sans doute à chacun de concevoir sa méthode en fonction de sa conception de l'objet « cinéma » et de son sujet d'études. C'est finalement tout l'enjeu, aujourd'hui, de la rubrique « Point de vue » de la revue 1895 où, dans chaque numéro, un chercheur en histoire du cinéma explique ses présupposés, ses principes, son approche, bref sa méthode... [...].*¹³

On pourrait suggérer que cette situation est due entre autres à l'évolution en Histoire ainsi qu'à la polyvalence du film.¹⁴ Et aussi qu'elle est une conséquence logique de la manière dont la discipline historique définit son propre travail, comme l'explique Antoine Prost : « L'Histoire, c'est ce que *font* les historiens ». ¹⁵ Vu que toute histoire est le résultat d'une construction, tout peut être choisi comme sujet et traité d'un point de vue ou d'un autre.

L'état de la question 2: Qu'est-ce que le « propre » de l'histoire du cinéma ?

Arrêtons-nous un instant afin de nous demander comment le film – sur pellicule ou plus tard sur bande vidéo – a été vu en tant qu'objet de recherche au sein de l'histoire de la cinématographie. Pour l'histoire dite « traditionnelle » il était au centre de leurs travaux, bien que la plupart des historiens n'aient eu guère accès à des sources autres que des documents non-film.¹⁶ Des milliers de films produits annuellement un peu partout dans le monde n'étaient simplement pas à la disposition des chercheurs. Ceux que l'on appelle les « nouveaux historiens » pouvaient accéder à bien plus de copies grâce à la collaboration avec les archives. Pourtant, l'exploration du territoire encore mal connu du cinéma des premiers temps demandait pour une large part aussi l'étude de documents non-film.¹⁷ Citons comme exemple Robert C. Allen et Douglas Gomery qui disaient en 1985 : « Le cinéma ne se résume certainement pas à un ensemble de films, c'est un tissu de systèmes interactifs où se retrouvent la communication humaine, l'activité économique, les échanges sociaux, l'expression artistique et la technologie ». ¹⁸ Pour Michèle Lagny, en 1992, ceci est toujours vrai : « Il est cependant clair que l'histoire de cinéma n'a de sens que lorsqu'elle accepte de ne pas s'arc-bouter sur la 'spécificité' de son objet ». ¹⁹ Cette mise en garde est sans doute importante et justifiée, compte tenu notamment du moment de l'écriture de son livre. Pourtant, la « spécificité » du cinéma, ce qui le distingue des autres objets historiques, ce sont – comme l'écrivent aussi les trois auteurs – les films, donc des images en mouvement sans ou avec son. Mais on sent bien la réticence des historiens cités, provoquée par le rôle trop prononcé (selon eux) des œuvres cinématographiques au sein de l'« histoire traditionnelle ».

On pourrait le dire autrement : s'il est bien possible, et même important, d'interroger le champ du cinéma dans ses multiples facettes, y compris des questions pour lesquelles on n'a pas forcément besoin de s'occuper des images en mouvement, il est vrai aussi que ces dernières constituent à la fois la raison d'être et le produit central de l'industrie cinématographique et d'autres instances qui s'y rattachent et qui permettent leur consommation dans toutes sortes de contextes et de lieux. Beaucoup d'historiens de cinéma ont conçu des articles à base de documents écrits et photographiques. Toutefois, dans un entretien, Lagny affirme : « On ne peut pas faire

de l'histoire du cinéma sans les films ». ²⁰ On ne peut le nier : les images en mouvement forment le « propre » de notre discipline même si, par la suite d'une certaine « overdose » dans le passé, cette constatation n'est pas partagée sans réserve. ²¹

Une réflexion s'impose à notre avis : ne pourrait-on pas, plus de vingt ans après la parution du livre de Michèle Lagny, poser la question si cette « spécificité » ne demande pas aussi, à un certain niveau du moins, ses propres procédures de recherche – c'est-à-dire non empruntées à une autre discipline ou du moins adaptées au besoin spécifique des films ?

L'état de la question 3 : Quels instruments et méthodes pour l'historiographie du cinéma ?

Depuis son apparition au cours des années 1890, la cinématographie a vu bien de tentatives à décrire son « évolution ». Les auteurs se distinguent par rapport à leurs motivations, intérêts, méthodes d'approche, objectifs, style, lecteurs visés, etc.

Prenons dans notre contexte l'objectif de deux auteurs « traditionnels » : Maurice Bardèche et Robert Brasillach font du manque futur la motivation première de leur travail au moment où le cinéma muet est menacé de disparaître définitivement, non pas seulement des écrans, mais aussi de la mémoire : « Avant qu'elles [les grandes œuvres du cinéma] n'aient tout à fait disparu de la mémoire des contemporains, c'est à les décrire que tâche à s'employer le présent livre ». ²² Depuis, les motivations ont bien changé, entre autres parce que l'historien du cinéma ne se voit plus comme le témoin direct d'un développement dont il rend compte au profit des futures générations, et surtout il ne fait plus le travail du critique de cinéma (qui évalue la valeur artistique des œuvres). Aujourd'hui il se voit comme un chercheur qui s'attaque à un problème spécifique, qui se pose au sein de la société dont le film rend un témoignage.

Donc le temps n'est plus, comme c'était longtemps le cas, aux historiens du cinéma qui sont en premier lieu des journalistes, des critiques de films ou des amateurs. Depuis une trentaine d'années, ce sont en premier lieu des universitaires qui s'en occupent, venus entre autres des études théâtrales, des langues, de la littérature voire de la sociologie, etc. Autrement dit, ceux qui travaillaient dans le passé sur des questions d'histoire du cinéma, dans beaucoup de cas du moins, n'étaient pas passés par la discipline historique et n'étaient donc pas formés comme leurs collègues. Aujourd'hui ceci n'est plus un problème grâce aux départements d'études cinématographiques et leurs diplômés. Comme le dit Laurent Le Forrester, les historiens de cinéma actuels cherchent en effet à construire leur travail sur les « réquisits de l'Histoire », en y empruntant des méthodes et des instruments : approche critique des sources, lecture minutieuse des documents, interprétation des données, etc. Comme en Histoire où il y a eu dans le passé des « clashes des générations » entre les « anciens » et les jeunes « révolutionnaires » des « Annales », on peut aussi distinguer la tendance d'une séparation nette dans notre discipline : la distinction proclamée par ceux que l'on a regroupés sous la dénomination de « nouvelle histoire du cinéma » et qui, en revanche, classaient leurs prédécesseurs comme des auteurs d'une « histoire passionnelle aux sources incertaines », selon l'expression de Michèle Lagny. ²³ La « nouvelle histoire », par contre, se réclamait d'une approche rigoureuse et scientifique, reprenant non seulement les instruments traditionnels de l'Histoire, mais en plus les questionnements de ses différents champs d'intervention comme l'histoire sociale, l'histoire économique ou encore l'histoire culturelle. Leur propres disciplines leur avaient fourni les instruments de la recherche scientifique ainsi qu'une sensibilité pour des questions liées à ces disciplines, outils nécessaires afin de parer le manque de films : l'Histoire, bien sûr, dans toutes ses facettes, mais aussi l'économie, la sociologie, l'anthropologie ou, pour d'autres types de recherches la narratologie, la linguistique, la sémiologie, l'histoire de l'art, sans oublier les efforts pour rendre explicites les cadres théoriques, voire philosophiques par

rapport auxquels on se situe : Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Hayden White, Paul Ricœur, Michel de Certeau, le Formalisme russe, l'École des Annales, etc. afin de ne citer que exemples bien connus.

Depuis quelques années on observe un changement de générations. Comme déjà mentionné il y a de plus en plus d'enseignants-chercheurs qui sont passés par une formation universitaire dans le champ des études cinématographiques, qui ont principalement vu le jour dans les années 1970 à 2000. Ceux-ci ont non seulement appris comment travailler avec des sources historiques écrites, photographiques et auditives, mais aussi comment analyser des images en mouvement. Reconnaître par exemple l'impact des techniques de filmage et du montage dans un film documentaire demande un œil bien formé, distinguer entre la forme potentiellement originale d'une copie et sa déformation par le temps exige des compétences et un regard spécifiques.

Comme nous l'avons déjà dit, la polyvalence de l'objet film a amené à une multiplication des perspectives, et par conséquent d'approches, de méthodes et d'instruments que les chercheurs trouvent dans des disciplines autres. Vu le passé de notre discipline, rares sont forcément encore les approches et méthodes qui ont émané des études cinématographiques ou, bien qu'empruntées à une autre discipline, ont été transformés dans l'objectif de les adapter au film et ses multiples facettes. On peut penser ici à ce que David Bordwell propose sous le nom de « *Historical Poetics* », ²⁴ aux études relevant d'une pragmatique historique, ²⁵ à la démarche « sémiotico-historique » de Michèle Lagny, Marie-Claire Ropars et Pierre Sorlin dans leur livre sur le cinéma français des années 1930, aux recherches d'André Gaudreault et son équipe du GRAFICS et sans doute d'autres encore qui cherchent à utiliser des films (toutes sortes de films, des films de fiction aux films de famille, des documentaires aux films pédagogiques etc.) comme des sources primaires et premières et se servent avant tout des outils analytiques et des concepts forgés par la première génération d'enseignants universitaires de notre discipline. ²⁶ La recommandation de Michèle Lagny que les historiens du cinéma devraient s'orienter davantage vers les instruments utilisés par l'Histoire a amené à un gain en précision, en méthode, en théorie et aussi en découvertes de faits en histoire du cinéma. Mais ceci n'a pas encore apporté des outils spécifiques pour traiter des images en mouvement : une approche originale qui correspond en plus à la nature polyvalente du film. Cette approche particulière ne pourrait pas venir d'autres disciplines car pour ceux-ci les problèmes inhérents au film ne se posent pas. Ses dimensions dépassent simplement ceux des autres. ²⁷

L'état de la question 4 : Quel avenir pour l'historiographie du cinéma ?

Il n'est sans doute pas un hasard si l'émergence d'une « nouvelle histoire du cinéma » (New Film History) a été attribuée aussi, et souvent même pour une très large part, à la meilleure accessibilité des films grâce au fait que certaines archives commençaient à s'ouvrir à la recherche universitaire. On pourrait ajouter l'effet de la vidéo permettant aux chercheurs, mais aussi aux départements universitaires, de se créer leurs propres « bibliothèques de films » facilement utilisables, ce qui était moins le cas pour les copies 16mm ou même 35mm collectionnées également par certains départements d'études cinématographiques. En même temps, on peut constater qu'il y a eu à partir de la deuxième moitié des années 1980, résultant notamment des discussions entre historiens et archivistes du cinéma, une prise de conscience croissante de la nécessité de s'interroger de manière plus systématique et rigoureuse sur le statut des documents audio-visuels qui forment la base pour des interprétations historiques (et dont l'article de Barbara Flückiger cité plus haut est un écho).

Aujourd'hui, le numérique a fondamentalement modifié les conditions de travail des historiens du cinéma. Non seulement peut-on consulter à partir de son propre ordinateur des collections de livres, de revues et de journaux à une échelle mondiale. Ce qui, avant, aurait demandé de longues voyages et des investissements financiers considérables, peut se faire à la maison grâce à l'internet. Mais aussi en ce qui concerne les films, la situa-

tion a fondamentalement changé : il y a de plus en plus d'éditions dvd de films, souvent en collaboration avec des archives, qui offrent en plus du matériel supplémentaire, parfois des versions alternatives, des commentaires fournis par le réalisateur et ses collaborateurs, ou encore par des spécialistes, etc. Sur son site, Ned Thanhouser rend disponibles les films de la firme de son grand-père, incitant des chercheurs à y contribuer par leurs études portant sur ce corpus. De nombreuses archives donnent accès en ligne à des films dans des versions restaurées, entre autres sur Europeana / European Gateway. La collection de Rick Prelinger permet de se pencher sur ce qu'il appelle des *sponsored films*, permettant de faire des recherches sur un secteur de la production peu pris en compte par les études cinématographiques. Des archives locales et régionales numérisent des films amateurs et les éditent sous forme de dvd ou en ligne, etc. – Certes : pour un bon nombre de questions les « copies numériques » n'équivalent pas à la consultation des « copies originales ». La nécessité de réfléchir sur le statut du matériel que l'on est en train d'analyser devient ainsi d'autant plus pressante, et les programmes universitaires ont le devoir de sensibiliser les étudiants à ces questions. Mais si nous comparons, à l'échelle de notre propre biographie de chercheurs ayant fait des études cinématographiques dans les années 1980, la situation actuelle avec celle que nous avons vécue à l'époque, les possibilités qui s'offrent à la nouvelle génération de chercheurs aujourd'hui sont époustouflantes.

Comme Bardèche et Brasillach le craignaient : beaucoup de films ont réellement disparu et l'on ne peut trouver leurs traces qu'à travers des sources écrites. En revanche, comme d'ailleurs dans les autres arts, il y a toujours beaucoup trop d'œuvres pour que l'historien puisse tenir compte de leur totalité. Avec le numérique, l'offre est devenue énorme. Or, comment s'attaquer à cette plénitude ? Et puis : comment préparer les étudiants à travailler sur toute cette masse de films qu'ils pourront désormais explorer ?

Il nous faudrait, par conséquent, revoir nos instruments, nos approches, nos méthodes de travail (notamment de sélection), et bien sûr aussi les questions que nous posons à l'histoire, questions souvent fabriquées pour étudier des sources écrites et en non pas pour une analyse approfondie d'un corpus constitué d'images en mouvement. Bien entendu : nous ne suggérons nullement de rompre avec les positions des « nouveaux historiens » qui ont fait leurs preuves et se sont avérées productives.

Mais nous sommes sans aucun doute en face de nouveaux défis. Comme le décrivent André Gaudreault et Philippe Marion dans leur dernier livre,²⁸ l'« identité » de l'objet cinéma (ainsi que celle de l'objet film) est prise dans un processus de transformation provoqué par l'avènement du numérique. Cela a des conséquences aussi pour le statut des études cinématographiques qui se traduisent, entre autres, au niveau des intitulés, mais aussi des structures des programmes.²⁹ Quelle place aura dorénavant l'histoire du cinéma dans cet ensemble reconfiguré ? Ayant, littéralement, une abondance de sources au bout des doigts, comment incorporer ces nouvelles possibilités dans l'enseignement ? Comment allons-nous former la nouvelle génération d'étudiants (et donc potentiellement de futurs chercheurs) ? Quels sont les nouveaux outils qu'il faut mettre à leur disposition pour qu'ils puissent développer de nouvelles questions qui leur permettront de bénéficier un maximum de ces possibilités extraordinaires ? Celles-ci rendent possibles à la fois des analyses extrêmement pointues – des nano-histoires, si l'on veut – et des approches à une échelle large, des études comparatives et transnationales permettant d'aller peut-être de nouveau dans la direction d'une histoire générale du cinéma, mais d'une toute autre manière ; non plus sous forme de l'« histoire passionnelle aux sources incertaines », pas non plus en « histoire-panthéon » (Michèle Lagny)³⁰ avec ses « film-phares » et ses idées préconçues du développement progressif du talent de l'artiste, mais sous forme d'analyses rigoureuses, méthodiques, vérifiables, discutés et visant le degré le plus objectif possible qu'une discipline en sciences humaines puisse atteindre. Il y a déjà un certain nombre d'initiatives dans cette direction, mais pour aller plus loin il faudra mener des débats à un niveau plus général et plus international.

Il y a encore une autre raison pour s'attaquer à ces questions. Nous travaillons tous dans un environnement

dans lequel un engagement des instances politiques pour des institutions culturelles, pour le patrimoine, pour la recherche historique, pour la réflexion théorique ne va plus de soi. Pour demander des crédits pour la recherche, il faut justifier non seulement l'intérêt scientifique du projet, mais aussi expliquer ce qu'il apporte à un niveau plus général, quels savoirs il produira ainsi qu'où et comment ceux-ci pourront être disséminés. Désormais nous devons nous préparer, et surtout préparer nos étudiants, à trouver des réponses convaincantes à ces questions.

La « société 3.0 » et les images en mouvement

Le « caméléon » film, comme nous l'avons appelé, est face à un monde qui change en grande vitesse. La « génération Facebook » joue sur le clavier du World Wide Web comme leur parents autrefois sur les touches de la télécommande. Les médias sociaux (*social media*) leur proposent non seulement un gigantesque réservoir de films, voire de fragments de films, ils ont aussi un impact sur leur perception du monde. Depuis la fin du XX^e siècle nous avons assisté au changement du centenaire de l'audio-visuel à l'ère de la communication digitale que sera le XXI^e siècle. La globalisation économique et médiatique nous a amené un monde où la consommation des images en mouvement est une habitude quotidienne : en 2013 les US-Américains passaient 34 heures par semaine en moyenne uniquement devant leur écran de télévision, sans compter le temps passé devant leurs écrans d'ordinateur ou de portable.³¹ En 2011, 140 films ou extraits de films ont été vus par jour et par être humain uniquement sur YouTube.³²

Comme Philippe Gauthier³³ le mentionne dans sa thèse il y a eu plusieurs moments provoquant des changements en Histoire : vers 1900 et après 1945 les questions et méthodes sont modifiées en parallèle à la transformation de la société. Nous nous trouvons aujourd'hui dans une situation semblable. Depuis une vingtaine d'années, l'homme se voit confronté à un changement d'habitudes qui, par sa vitesse et son étendue, est vraisemblablement unique jusqu'à ce jour. D'ici quelque temps, les représentants de l'Histoire auront formulé tout un tas de nouvelles questions imposées par cet ère digital qui est très largement dominé par l'impacte des images audio-visuelles. Or, ceci est le domaine propre des études cinématographiques. Ne serait-il pas à notre discipline de proposer méthode, théorie, instruments, etc. aux historiens dont nous avons profité dans le passé ? Qu'est-ce qu'il nous faudra pour réaliser cette ambition ? Certainement un corpus méthodique comportant d'un côté des outils adaptés aux spécificités des images en mouvement et de leur nature polyvalente, d'un autre côté des pratiques originales issues de la créativité des chercheurs formés par les études cinématographiques. Certainement aussi de nouvelles questions qui amèneront une nouvelle génération d'historiens vers de nouveaux territoires à explorer.

Rick Altman disait sur la « nouvelle histoire » : « Film history has now reached its second stage: from the who, what, where and when we have moved to the how and why ».³⁴ Pourquoi ne pas se dire que nous nous trouvons actuellement dans la transition vers la « phase n° 3 » dont les contours sont encore flous mais dont on sent déjà le potentiel pour l'histoire du cinéma. Et qui nous donnera éventuellement des nouvelles réponses inspiratrices à la question posée constamment et de manière de plus en plus insistante par le monde qui nous entoure et les institutions universitaires, culturelles et politiques dont nous dépendons sur le plan financier : « à quoi peut servir tout cela ».

Quelles perspectives pour l'historiographie du cinéma ?

Notes

- ¹ Leopold von Ranke, *Tagebuchblätter, 1831-1849*, dans Id., *Das politische Gespräch und andere Schriften zur Wissenschaften*, Max Niemeyer Verlag, Halle-Saale 1925, p. 52 (<http://www.philo52.com/articles.php?pg=40>).
- ² Michèle Lagny, *De l'Histoire du cinéma. Méthode historique et histoire du cinéma*, Armand Colin, Paris 1992, p. 9.
- ³ Ne citons que François Albera, Thomas Elsaesser, André Gaudreault, Philippe Gauthier, Paul Kusters, Michèle Lagny, mais il y a bien d'autres.
- ⁴ Nous présentons ces points sous forme de questions, comme les règles du jeu académique en Histoire l'exigent. Nous sommes conscients du fait que nous n'échapperons pas aux limites inhérentes à cette approche, et avant tout celle-ci : que les questions pré-déterminent en quelque sorte les réponses. En tant que chercheurs nés au milieu du dernier siècle et vivant au début du XXI^e siècle nos « lunettes historiques » ne nous permettront de toute manière qu'une vision restreinte par notre socialisation académique. Nos propos sont donc forcément subjectifs et les résultats auront un caractère plutôt hypothétique.
- ⁵ Cf. Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst, Philippe Meers (sous la direction de), *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, MA-Oxford 2011.
- ⁶ Par rapport au cinéma, Jacques Aumont souligne son hétérogénéité, ce qui implique en fait un désir de homogénéité et signale qu'il y a défaut. Nous préférons l'expression « polyvalence », car elle souligne de manière positive la multitude des possibilités que le média a su développer. Dans ce contexte Aumont mentionne également la polysémie du mot « cinéma », problème qui s'y ajoute dans les pays francophones. Par contre, dans les pays germanophones en anglophones il y a des termes différents pour l'institution (Kino, Movie Theatre) et l'art (Film, Moving Image). Cf. Jacques Aumont « L'Histoire du cinéma n'existe pas », dans *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 21, n° 2-3, printemps 2011, p. 155.
- ⁷ Charles Pathé, *Écrits autobiographiques*, édition établie, annotée et présentée par Pierre Lherminier, L'Harmattan, Paris 2006, p. 153.
- ⁸ Boleslas Matuszewski, *Une nouvelle source de l'histoire du cinéma (Création d'un dépôt de cinématographie historique)*, Paris 1898, réimprimé en fac-similé dans Boleslas Matuszewski, *Écrits cinématographiques*, édité par Magdalena Mazaraki, Association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma, Cinémathèque française, Paris 2006, pp. 91-102.
- ⁹ « As a material object film is the product of several histories [...]. Most often, these histories collapse into an individual film object, even when we consider anything else than the original camera negative. These histories have overlapping traces; they interfere with and mask each other ». Barbara Flückiger, « Material Properties of Historical Film in the Digital Age » (<http://www.necus-ejms.org/material-properties-of-historical-film-in-the-digital-age/>, dernier accès 4 janvier 2013).
- ¹⁰ C'est nous qui soulignons. Cité d'après son livre qui en est dérivé : Ernst Bernheim, *Einleitung in die Geschichtswissenschaft*, G.J. Göschen'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Leipzig 1907, p. 5.
- ¹¹ C'est nous qui soulignons. Dosse cité d'après Antoine Prost, *Douze leçons sur l'histoire*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1996, p. 10.
- ¹² François Dosse dans son fameux livre constate par rapport à l'histoire de la discipline que l'Histoire est « en miettes ». Il renvoie avec cette remarque à la multiplication des thèmes traités, à « l'extension indéfinie des curiosités historiennes » comme dit Antoine Prost (*Idem*, p. 43). Dans le cas de Flückiger il s'agit en principe d'un thème – le parcours du film qui lui a donné sa patine – qui est vu selon diffé-

rentes perspectives. Chacune des perspectives renvoie chez elle à une histoire particulière. Il ne s'agit pas d'une multiplication des sujets examinés mais d'une multiplication des « sous-points » d'une seule recherche qui produit selon l'auteur plusieurs histoires. Il ne s'agit pas de poser deux ou trois grandes questions au sujet comme c'est la tradition historique afin de « faire avancer la discipline » (*Idem*, p. 85), mais de faire en quelque sorte une « vivisection » du film afin de constater l'état de sa matérialité.

¹³ Laurent Le Forestier, « Présentation », dans Laurent Le Forestier (sous la direction de), *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, cit., p. 14.

¹⁴ Jacques Aumont (« L'Histoire du cinéma n'existe pas », cit., p. 166) ne croit pas qu'une histoire des images en mouvement puisse être écrite : « [...] il n'existe pas d'histoire adéquate des images – seulement de leur être socialisé. Il donne comme raison justement cette polyvalence, cette « hétérogénéité » qui s'y opposerait. Une conséquence de cette réflexion serait que les ouvrages parlant du passé de la cinématographie n'auraient que peu de valeur à cause de leur insuffisance. Pourtant on n'a pas l'impression que les auteurs auraient eu l'impression de ne pas maîtriser leur sujet et les lecteurs l'idée qu'ils auraient lu un ouvrage inadéquat.

¹⁵ C'est nous qui soulignons. Antoine Prost, *Douze leçons sur l'histoire*, cit., p. 13.

¹⁶ Cf. entre autres l'exemple d'un des plus importants historiens du cinéma mondial, Georges Sadoul, qui l'admet lui-même à plusieurs reprises. Cf. par exemple Georges Sadoul, *Avertissement*, dans *Id.*, *Histoire Générale du cinéma*, vol. 2, Denoël, Paris 1978, p. 9.

¹⁷ Ainsi qu'une créativité à trouver ces sources de première main à des endroits particuliers où les prédécesseurs n'étaient pas allés chercher, tels archives de police, des sapeurs-pompiers, des églises, des municipalités, etc. On pourrait y voir aussi une distinction prononcée de la jeune génération vis-à-vis ses « pères ».

¹⁸ Robert C. Allen, Douglas Gomery, *Faire l'histoire du cinéma*, Nathan, Paris 1993, p. 53.

¹⁹ Michèle Lagny, *De l'Histoire du cinéma*, cit., p. 282.

²⁰ Frank Kessler : « man kann keine Filmgeschichte ohne Filme betreiben! Ein Gespräch mit Michèle Lagny », dans *Montage/AV*, n° 5/1, 1996, p. 21.

²¹ Lors du colloque Thomas Elsaesser racontait ses propres expériences que certains historiens aurait été fiers de travailler sans toucher aux images en mouvement.

²² Maurice Bardèche, Robert Brasillach, *Histoire du cinéma*, Denoël et Stelle, Paris 1935, p. 1, qui réfèrent à l'industrie cinématographique qui détruisait les copies. Plus près de nous, depuis 1988 Paolo Cherchi Usai n'a cessé de souligner le caractère auto-destructeur des films. Cf. Paolo Cherchi Usai, « Une image-modèle », dans *Hors Cadre*, n° 6, 1988, pp. 229-235.

²³ Michèle Lagny, *De l'Histoire du cinéma*, cit., p. 15. Cf. aussi le travail de Philippe Gauthier sur le développement de la discipline en France jusqu'à l'année 1960. Il distingue principalement deux grandes tendances (toute en critiquant cette dichotomie comme trop simpliste) : les auteurs dits « traditionnels » et ceux de la « nouvelle histoire ». On pourrait y ajouter d'autres, par exemple ceux de la « Contre-Histoire » (Francis Lacassin, *Pour une contre-histoire du cinéma* ; Peter Bächlin, *Der Film als Ware*) qui cherchait les « coins oubliés de l'histoire », ceux de la « ré-vision » – souvent appelée « historiens révisionnistes » et identifiés à la « New Film History », ceux donc qui veulent prouver les défauts et erreurs de leur prédécesseurs, que nous appellerions dans notre contexte peut-être mieux « the angry film historiens » (Deslandes/Richard, *Sauvage*) afin d'éviter la connotation « revendication » liée aux négateurs de l'Holocauste. Il y avait également les « alternatifs », ceux dont l'approche est déterminée par une vision autre de la société (en idéologie par exemple le marxisme-leninisme, en « courant social » par exemple le féminisme).

Quelles perspectives pour l'historiographie du cinéma ?

²⁴ Cf. David Bordwell, « Historical Poetics of Cinema », dans R. Barton Palmer (sous la direction de), *The Cinematic Text. Methods and Approaches*, Georgia State Literary Studies, n° 3, 1989, pp. 369-398.

²⁵ Voir par exemple Frank Kessler, « Historische Pragmatik », dans *Montage/AV*, n° 11/2, 2001, pp. 104-112.

²⁶ Mentionnons aussi au niveau de l'approche historico-esthétique, par exemple, l'analyse statistique proposée par Barry Salt (et continuée par Cinemetrics). Puis au niveau de la présentation des résultats de la recherche il y a, par exemple, le format audio-visuel utilisé par Charles Musser pour ses recherches sur Edwin S. Porter et le duo Kevin Brownlow et David Gill pour leurs séries télévisuelles, entre autres, sur Charles Chapin, la confrontation d'un document publié d'un côté avec son interprétation par l'auteur de l'autre côté pratiquée par George C. Pratt (*Spellbound in Darkness: History of the Silent Film*) et Herbert Birett (*Lichtspiele. Der Kino in Deutschland bis 1914*), le « clash » des images par leur juxta-position dans l'exposition permanente d'un musée de cinéma proposé par Dominique Païni dans son exposé pour un futur musée de cinéma au Palais de Tokyo. Parfois une adaptation pose problème même à ceux qui la proposent. Le modèle fascinant des trois durées de Fernand Braudel par Gabriele Jutz et Gottfried Schlemmer (*Vorschläge zur Filmgeschichtsschreibung. Mit einigen Beispielen zur Geschichte filmischer Repräsentations- und Wahrnehmungskventionen*, dans Knut Hickethier (sous la direction de), *Filmgeschichte schreiben. Ansätze, Entwürfe und Methoden*, Edition Sigma, Berlin 1989, pp. 61-68) montre le dilemme : pour la courte durée « événementielle » et la durée intermédiaire ils ont trouvé facilement des équivalents, mais pour la longue durée, celle qui est « lente à couler », « quasi immobile » (Fernand Braudel) leur suggestion ne satisfait pas. Vu cet échec il est compréhensible que – au moins selon ce que nous savons – personne a essayé d'appliquer au cinéma le concept aussi fascinant de l'« histoire des mentalités » de Jacques Le Goff et Georges Duby.

²⁷ Jacques Aumont (« L'Histoire du cinéma n'existe pas », cit., p. 166) le décrit : « Il existe dans toute l'image des puissances que l'on peut analyser mais qui, en dernier ressort, sont des dynamismes, de vitesses, des glissements qu'il n'est possible de rationaliser qu'à la condition de négliger leur effet ».

²⁸ Cf. André Gaudreault, Philippe Marion, *La Fin du cinéma ? Un média en crise à l'ère du numérique*, Armand Colin, Paris 2013.

²⁹ Voir, entre autres, la contribution d'André Gaudreault dans ce volume.

³⁰ Michèle Lagny, *De l'Histoire du cinéma*, cit., p. 136.

³¹ « [...] Americans spent more than 34 hours per week in front of a TV set in the third quarter of 2012 with traditional TV viewing increasing by up 78 minutes compared with the previous quarter, even as consumers continue to enjoy both live and time-shifted content, DVDs, or use their game consoles ». Nielsen-Cross-Platform Report, cité par <http://www.connectedworld.tv/articles/live-tv-dominates-american-viewer-s-lives/10776>, dernier accès 30 janvier 2013.

³² « Web video is positively booming: the dominant force in the online video landscape, YouTube, reported over one trillion playbacks in 2011 – about 140 views for every person on planet earth ». Borcoci, Negru & Timmerer, 2011 cité d'après. Johan Oomen, Erwin Verbruggen, D7.6.2 *Online Access to Audiovisual Heritage. Status Report* (Exploring Europe's Television Heritage in Changing Contexts), EUScreen, Bruxelles, juillet 2012, p. 6.

³³ Philippe Gauthier, *Histoire(s) et historiographie du cinéma en France : 1896-1953*, Thèse de doctorat, Université de Montréal/Université de Lausanne, 2013, pp. 69-110.

³⁴ Charles F. Altman, « Towards a Historiography of American Film », dans *Cinema Journal*, n° 16/2, printemps 1977, p. 1.

Mapping *Tarzan* and Excavating Back-Projections: Rethinking Film History and the Politics of Time with Anthropology

In 1932, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) started the most popular series of Tarzan films with *Tarzan, the Ape Man*. Directed by W. S. Van Dyke, the film was not the first big-screen adaptation of Edgar Rice Burroughs' incredibly popular book, but it was the first sound film in the series and it popularized the hero's famous yell. *Tarzan, the Ape Man* also features one of the rare sequences in the series with images of "real" African tribes: a succession of shots made by Van Dyke a year earlier in East Africa and integrated in the film by means of back projection. In this particular context, the manifest use of back, or rear projection – the projection of a moving image onto the back of a translucent screen in front of which actors are filmed performing – is especially interesting, since it not only evokes a concrete objectification of the ethnographic "Other" as an image, but also a real politics of space and time. This essay, a close analysis of the sequence using both mapping and archaeology as paradigms, will allow us to explore the discursive nature of these images, introduce the anthropological notion of "allochronism" (denying the ethnographic "Other" coevalness with the anthropologist and interlocutor, rejecting the fact that they exist in the same time), and think about the multi-layered temporality of film.

A characteristic sequence

As he prepares for a dangerous trip to the legendary grounds of Elephant's Graveyard, the experienced trader and entrepreneur James Parker (Charles Aubrey Smith) receives the unexpected visit of his daughter Jane (Maureen O'Sullivan). Freshly arrived from Europe with her six trunks of luggage, she joins him in his modest log cabin, where she changes her clothes and freshens up. While cleansing her face with cold cream ("to preserve that school girl complexion!"), she is surprised by the sound of native peoples singing (they can be heard throughout the sequence). "What's that?," she asks, moving towards the window, through which she witnesses a parade of African tribes. While Jane is getting ready by the window, her father mentions the Wakambas

and the Karabandas and explains to her that the tribes are there to trade. Wearing her father's safari hat, Jane leaves the cabin and goes outside to watch them. Her father follows her, providing her with a number of pseudo-ethnographic details on the "natives," just as his young associate Harry (Neil Hamilton) joins them. Even though most of the images are introduced through the classical shot/reverse shot figure, the three characters occasionally stand before back-projected images of warriors as well as men and women dancing (fig. 67). Jane asks many questions and cannot avoid the occasional condescending remark.

Why is this short sequence *characteristic*? First, because this is one of the few sequences in the famous MGM series including images of native peoples actually shot on location in Africa, as I already pointed out. Despite the occasional reference to the "natives" in different films (six for MGM overall, starring Olympic swimming champion Johnny Weissmuller and Irish actress Maureen O'Sullivan), Africans are virtually absent from the series. Mostly interpreted by American actors, the rare Africans in Tarzan are stereotypical characters (usually porters), systematically relegated to the film's background, along with the exotic animals and plants that constitute the movies' setting. This succession of images is thus particularly interesting in its articulation of a discourse on the ethnographic "Other" – who is also the colonial "Other" in this instance.

Another aspect making the sequence characteristic is its use of back projection. *Tarzan the Ape Man* not only explores the possibilities opened by this type of composite imagery before Cooper and Schoedsack's famous *King Kong* (1933).¹ It also exposes one of its greatest paradoxes: the fact that back projections (known as *transparences* in French) emphasize the film's materiality, while being committed (at least most often, and with regards to classical cinema) to an "aesthetics of transparency." Ironically revealing their own structure of representation, the back-projected images of African tribes in *Tarzan* disarticulate space and time, laying bare the discursive constructions they convey.² To understand how, a closer look at the movie itself is necessary.

Mapping Tarzan: horning into Africa with "One-Shot Woody"

Tarzan's director was Woodbridge Strong Van Dyke II (1889-1943), an American filmmaker who started his film career as a key grip to David Wark Griffith in 1916. In the 1920s, Van Dyke acquired a reputation for shooting fast (hence his nickname, "one-shot Woody"), directing a number of westerns, melodramas and serials. In 1926, he signed a contract with MGM and in 1928 he completed *White Shadows in the South Seas*, the result of an alleged collaboration with Robert Flaherty. The whole film was shot in Tahiti (see *infra*). Two years later, Woodbridge directed his first talkie, *Trader Horn*, which MGM announced as the "first fiction film ever to be shot in Africa." Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture in 1931 (which the western *Cimarron* eventually won), *Trader Horn* was based on the homonymous book by South-Africa-born novelist Ethelreda Lewis, which recounted the life of Alfred Aloysius Horn (1861-1931), a British adventurer and ivory trader. The novel, published in 1927, became a widely read bestseller soon translated into different languages, and Hollywood producers Louis B. Mayer and Irving Thalberg hastened to secure film rights. The film's plot focuses on the rescue of Nina Trent, "the White Goddess" (played by Edwina Booth), by Aloysius "Trader" Horn (Harry Carey) and his friend Peru (Duncan Renaldo). The lost daughter of a missionary couple, Nina rules over a savage, violent tribe of cannibals, the Isorga (an imaginary tribe, albeit one whose name is phonetically reminiscent of the Igbo or Ibo, an ethnic group from Southern Nigeria). Nina eventually falls in love with Peru and runs away from the tribe (fig. 68).

The film, shot in part in Kenya, Uganda and Congo, proved challenging and very expensive. Shooting lasted for almost a year and was marred by many incidents. After embarking to Mombasa, the crew travelled 22,000 kilometers across five European colonies, crossing the Equator countless times and even building roads where

none existed.³ 300 African workers (mostly Kenyans) followed a ten-ton generator truck, carrying lamps, incandescent light bulbs, a portable laboratory and other equipment.⁴ Describing the film's plot as "nothing short of a genocidal fantasy," where "black bodies drop like flies," Philip J. Ethington also points out that many animals were "killed on-camera, for-camera."⁵ Footage of wild animals was indeed an important component of the film and the metaphor of the camera as a predatory weapon was perhaps never as concrete as when the team once shot "thirty-seven big game animals in a single day."⁶ The crew as well as the cast were plagued by malaria, including the main actress, Edwina Booth, who did not fully recover from her African experience until several years later and filed a suit against MGM for that reason. Van Dyke and his cinematographer Clyde de Vinna returned to California with over one million feet of film, but connecting scenes and close-up dialogues still had to be shot.⁷ In spite of all these difficulties, the movie was an astounding commercial success, both domestically and internationally, with Ernest Hemingway crediting it for his fascination with Africa. In France, a production still from the film appeared with the caption "Pygmies facing the camera, Congo" in the book *Races* (1930), authored by the renowned French geographer Jean Brunhes (fig. 69).⁸ That this kind of image so quickly found its way into a scientific publication like *Races* (the film's shooting was completed in August 1930; the volume was published at the end of the same year) stresses the extraordinary visual economy in which such images circulated, as well as the porosity of what we understand today to constitute different areas of knowledge and creation. Mapping *Tarzan the Ape Man* thus involves a reconstruction of the movie's (audio-)visual environment and its place in a contemporaneous network of other still and moving images, from the film *Trader Horn* to the book *Races*.⁹ The paradigm of mapping makes possible an understanding of how the film's footage came to exist and how they evolved in their vibrant visual environment.

Unlike *Trader Horn*, *Tarzan the Ape Man* was not shot in Africa, but in Culver City and Lake Sherwood, California.¹⁰ MGM wished to capitalize on *Trader's Horn* success and to use some of the million feet of location footage shot by Van Dyke in Africa.¹¹ Within weeks of the film's opening, production head Irving Thalberg had signed a deal with Edgar Rice Burroughs, Tarzan's creator. *Tarzan of the Apes* was soon advertised as "the *Trader Horn* of 1932," or as a film "even more thrilling than *Trader Horn*."¹² The picture was effectively conceived as a sequel to *Trader Horn*, with the earlier scripts even including Horn as a character. In the context of *Tarzan*, the images shot on location function as additional attractions, trophies that Van Dyke and De Vyna had previously won during their African shooting spree (pun intended).¹³ At the time of its release, the press praised the film's process shots, in particular its landscapes and animal scenes.¹⁴ Despite their pseudo-ethnographical interest, emphasized by a few circumstantial mentions,¹⁵ and a narrative effort to discipline them into an approximate form of diegetic coherence, these images are attractions per se, indicating a drive towards display and pure exhibitionism that literally makes a spectacle of the exotic "Other."¹⁶ If this type of sequence underlines the voyeuristic and exhibitionist dimension of the cinematographic spectacle, it cannot be fully grasped without reference to the long tradition of human displays.

Excavating Tarzan: the "Other" on Parade

To excavate *Tarzan* and to apply what could be called an "archaeological paradigm" to the sequence in question means to examine it as discursive formation over a longer time period, evoking a constellation of other (sometimes very different) images, spectacles and phenomena. This (Foucault-inspired) approach necessarily takes us to the widespread 19th- and 20th-century tradition of publicly exhibiting human beings in the context of so-called "anthropological" shows, international exhibitions and world's fairs.¹⁷ Going back to the Renaissance, but developing, in their modern form, from the 19th century on, human displays attracted millions

of spectators all over the western Hemisphere well through the 1930s, and even later. Foreign and indigenous populations were presented to the public as ethnological specimens, evoking forms of past human development, but effectively celebrating the recent European colonial expansion. Western visitors went to these shows in order to "learn" and to "educate" themselves. The planet's most "exotic" regions in various colonial empires were represented by mock indigenous villages where "natives" performed such common activities as cooking, playing or dancing. Despite their educational agenda, which effectively invited the visitor to endorse very specific views on race and civilization, such exhibitions fully belonged to the entertainment landscape of the different imperial metropolises. Sightseeing was not only motivated by curiosity or philosophical interest: visitors were *spectators* and *consumers*, lured in by commodities such as "exotic" objects and foods. Despite the heterogeneity of these different (audio-)visual spectacles (from ethnographic exhibitions aimed at the scholarly elite to theater and cabaret shows targeting the middle class), these displays inevitably contributed to the construction of a socially shared imagination about the "Other," an anonymous and extremely diverse entity encompassing all those that did not belong to an essentially white and Western image of civilization. Not all indigenous populations were the same, as different peoples embodied different stereotypes – and what could be called different gradations of the "exotic emotion," ranging from the "barbaric" and the "savage" to the merely "exotic."

From the very beginning, cinema was attracted to these displays, as a few films made by the Lumière brothers in 1896 and 1897 reveal: *Baignade de nègres* and *Nègres en corvée* were shot at the Jardin d'Acclimatation in Paris; *Nègres ashanti*, in a colonial exhibit in Lyon.¹⁸ But one should also mention Edison's famous *Indian War Council* and *Sioux Ghost Dance*, filmed by William Kennedy Laurie Dickson at the Black Maria in September 1894 and featuring Sioux Indians who were performing nearby as part of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.¹⁹ By documenting – and staging – these displays, moving pictures progressively took the place of living spectacles, eliminating face-to-face contact and disciplining the "Other" into an image ready for consumption by the masses. More than ever perhaps, the "Other" was an object to be displayed, as our sequence from *Tarzan* does show. Jane, who symbolizes the culture of the colonial, industrialized world, embodies the figure of the visitor-spectator, promenading casually with her companions in front of the back-projected images, exactly as she could have in one of the countless indigenous villages so often set up in different European capitals, or before the models and dioramas of natural history museums. The power relation is clear: Jane monopolizes the Gaze, but also Speech (the "Other" chants but never speaks). The images chosen by Van Dyke for the sequence are also emblematic: they consist in the traditional staging of the Exotic "Other," forever condemned to sing and to execute ritual dances for the camera. The "parade" consists not only in the staged procession of the tribes for the camera, but also in the ostentatious display of the back-projection artifice.

The opacity of "transparencies"

If the idea of parade evokes the act of showing ostentatiously, the use of back-projected images is everything but an inconspicuous choice. The first time Jane sees the natives, the pictures filmed for *Trader Horn* are introduced by the classical shot/reverse shot device that effectively makes the cut seamless: the contradiction is all the more evident with the back-projected images. Back or rear projections (falling into the larger category of process shots) are a composite technique widely used by the Hollywood studio system from the 1930s to the 1970s and allowing to combine star presence and narrative setting with audible dialogue. The average classical movie had the narrative setting filmed on the appropriate location (often by a second unit): this "plate" would then be taken to a specialized studio adapted for the rear-projection process, where the image was projected onto a translucent screen before which the relevant actors perform. Back projection is seen most often in shots of actors speaking dialogue while in a car or another moving vehicle: if the projected background is moving, it

is called a plate or process shot; and if the background is still, it is called a stereo or transparency shot.²⁰ Even though back-projection technology had existed for some time (it was first used in the 1910s),²¹ the technique became popular with the arrival of sound-on-film recording in the late 1920s and 1930s and it was favored by studio producers.²² This is particularly surprising: if back-projections seem to be an obsolete technique today, they were never entirely seamless and Hollywood technicians multiplied the strategies and developments in order to dissimulate their most visible flaws, lighting inconsistencies or the loss of image quality in rephotographed plates.²³ As Julie Turnock has shown, technicians systematically resisted rear projection, against the wishes of producers and, to a lesser degree, the wishes of filmmakers and cinematographers.²⁴ Drawing on a number of articles published in technical journals such as *American Cinematographer* or *The Cine Technician*, we have good reason to believe that back projections were noticeable for 1930s audiences. It is not only that rear projections “looked bad” or “funny”²⁵ (or that photorealism is a historically variable style – which it certainly is), but also that they never fitted into the classical system’s quest for transparent seamlessness. As Laura Mulvey puts it, with back projections

*the discordance between studio and setting tended to become visible, affecting narrative coherence and threatening the transparency of the classical cinema. Consciously or unconsciously, rear projection inserted into movies another cinematic realism, one that foregrounded the ‘reality’ of process and material.*²⁶

Both Mulvey and Dominique Païni have written on this paradox, in particular with regards to Hitchcock, but this is not the point of this essay.²⁷ Instead, I would like to focus on the reflexive dimension of these “transparencies” or, as Louis Marin would say, their “opacity:”

*Transparency and opacity of representation: what do these terms mean? Any representation represents something, but any representation also presents itself as representing something. The transitive, mimetic transparency of representation – representing something – is articulated to its reflexive opacity – presenting itself.*²⁸

In other words, the back-projected images in *Tarzan the Ape Man* are also *reflexive* – as are its background sounds, the chants, which effectively constitute the equivalent of rear-projected images. By this, I do not mean that the spectators who notice them necessarily leap to judgments of reflexivity about what back-projection means within the movie’s formal and narrative system, but – in line with Marin’s argument – that representation has a dual dimension. On the one hand, representation is *transitive*: it re-presents something, by substituting a present entity for an absent one through a mimetic economy (the filmed images of African indigenous people stand for African indigenous people). On the other hand, representation is also *reflexive*, inasmuch as it also presents itself as an autonomous entity, while representing something else (a screen with back-projected images in front of which different actors perform). This reflexive dimension is more or less *opaque*, in Marin’s view: paradoxically, transparencies (in the sense of back projections) tend to be opaque, since they are very often seamless. Moreover, and with regard to the sequence in question, the back-projected images tell us more about a politics of space and time related to the period’s discursive constructions around the exotic “Other” than about what – and who – they actually represent.

Other men in another time

I have already suggested that the use of back projections in *Tarzan* contributes to the display of the “Other” as spectacle and attraction. Even if the sequence in question does not constitute a moment of “pure” visual plea-

sure or stimulation, we are still before a "tamed attraction:" one tamed by the conventions of classical Hollywood film – the natives are there for a narrative reason (they want to trade and Harry even recognizes among them "old chief Oomteli;" they are not singing but "invoking their gods to give them the best of the bargain," etc.).²⁹ The voyeuristic and exhibitionist dimension of the sequence is, nonetheless, extremely obvious; furthermore, the individuals pictured in the sequence are still, at that particular moment in time, (fairground) attractions themselves.

Such "tamed attractions" not only disrupt the film's narrative drive, but are also problematic in terms of cinematic space and time. If, as Dominique Païni writes, back projections are an attempt to create a homogenous space between the foreground and the background, this *Tarzan* sequence is, on the contrary, characterized by the heterogeneity of its shots.³⁰ This is very interesting in terms of a *politics of space*, since here the use of transparencies works as a concrete way of setting up a spatial distance between Jane and her Western companions, and the exotic "Other." Jane is meant to share the same space with the African tribes – yet such a space is not only virgin in referential terms (Tarzan's Africa is always generic, without states or history), it is also a space where physical coexistence is impossible. The "Other" is objectified as image: relegated to the film's background, it becomes part of the scenery. Paradoxically, the noticeable use of back-projection brings the "Other" to the discursive foreground, effectively drawing attention to the difference and disparity that classical film style was always careful to efface.

It is with regard to time, however, that the back-projection effect becomes particularly interesting in the context of a discussion related to anthropological and ethnographic difference. At the time when *Tarzan* was shot, widespread evolutionary theories claimed that so-called "primitive people" belonged to a different time – a "less developed," "older" time, the past of "civilized" man. Dutch anthropologist Johannes Fabian has extensively discussed this problem in *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*.³¹ In the book, he denounces what he calls an "epistemological scandal" at the heart of the anthropological discipline, with both theoretical and political consequences: the way that anthropological discourse relegates its "Other" to other times. Described as "primitives," "savages," or simply as "unchanging" (Fabian is also critical of Lévi-Strauss's conception of "cold" cultures), these observed "Others" are treated as static objects, available to be studied as they are. Such denial of coevalness has a name: allochronism, "a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse."³² Anthropology, therefore, is "a science of other men in another time,"³³ while ethnography, which presupposes intersubjective time, contradicts anthropological discourse. Anthropology is thus split from within, rooted as it is in different operative conceptions of time, a situation that Fabian calls anthropology's "schizogenic use of Time"³⁴ or, in other words, the application of two different understandings of time at odds with each other.

If back projections in *Tarzan* expose a politics of space, they also reveal a politics of time. Disrupted by the visibility of back-projected images, the narrative fails to conceal the temporal distance between the shots. The communicative farce (Jane's "Let's trade!" as she leaves her father's cabin) proves ineffective. The exotic "Other" clearly belongs to another time, one different from Jane's time or the time of Western civilization. It might even be that the exotic "Other" exists out of time, the back-projection device transforming the indigenous people portrayed in the film into barely living museum artifacts saved from the movement of history, in a gesture akin to what Fatimah Robing Tony calls "cinematic taxidermy."³⁵

Exotic and (para-)ethnographic films of the period all display a similar politics of time, despite their different ambitions and agendas (fig. 70). Another interesting example (with respect to *Tarzan's* universe) is *White Shadows in the South Seas* (W. S. Van Dyke and Robert Flaherty, 1928). The film focuses on Dr. Lloyd (Monte Blue), an alcoholic doctor who is shanghaied by Sebastian (Robert Anderson), an unscrupulous pearl trader, and ends up being abandoned on a Pacific island whose natives have never seen a white man before. As time

passes, Lloyd is revered as a god, but his corrupt nature and inherent greed eventually bring about the destruction of the island community. Towards the end of the film, Sebastian arrives at the pre-colonial island where Dr Lloyd was stranded and notices a beautiful pearl around the neck of an innocent native girl: holding a watch to her ear, he eventually exchanges it for what she sees as a common, worthless pearl (figg. 71-72). The trade is symbolical: if the islanders' time is the typological time of tradition, "fresh from the Touch of God," corrupt civilization brings with it a new, physical time: clock-time.³⁶ Like *Trader Horn* and *Tarzan the Ape Man*, *White Shadows in the South Seas* is also the adaptation of a novel: Frederick O'Brien's homonymous work (1919), a popular best-seller submitted by the author himself as a detailed screen concept to MGM in 1927. Unlike other contemporary tales, however, O'Brien's book explicitly questions the colonial order, lamenting the "degenerating" influence of the West on what is conceived as a lost "paradise" – such a place being, naturally, "out of time." Irving Thalberg and young producer David O'Selznick decided to bring the book to the screen, and the studio hired both Flaherty and Van Dyke as associate directors in what proved to be an impossible assignment. Flaherty, by then an already noted filmmaker, knew O'Brien personally and had even shot *Moana* (1926) partly because of the journalist's book (the film, shot in Western Samoa, was produced by Famous Players-Lasky, soon to be reorganized under the name Paramount). Despite *Moana*'s limited commercial success, compared with the surprising box-office achievement of *Nanook of the North* in 1922, Flaherty was regarded as the guarantor of the picture's "truthfulness" and "accuracy" (in his review of *Moana* in the *New York Sun*, John Grierson had famously praised its "documentary value").³⁷ He also had the advantage of already knowing the South Pacific.³⁸ However, the collaboration between Van Dyke and Flaherty soon proved impossible, with Flaherty scouting locations and auditioning native cast members while a homesick Van Dyke tried to shoot the picture as quickly and efficiently as possible.³⁹ A few months after the team's arrival in the South Pacific, Flaherty quit the project: Van Dyke completed the movie with Clyde de Vinna, whose photography later earned him an Academy Award for the film. Unlike *Moana*, *White Shadows* was a success and saved MGM from financial collapse.

Conclusion: the multi-layered temporalities of film

If the politics of time in exotic and ethnographic film from the classical period deserve to be further explored, I would like to conclude by going back to the back-projected images in *Tarzan the Ape Man*. These images remind us of the complex, multi-layered temporality of the objects that we, as film historians and theorists, are bound to work with: by suggesting a *mapping* – focused on chronology and synchronicity – and an *archaeological approach* – mindful of the longer duration of discursive configurations – I have tried to address some of the methodological challenges posed by such objects. Inevitably rooted in a wider and heterogeneous (audio)visual culture, they convey filmic responses to larger discursive problems. With regard to the filmic aspects of this sequence, the issue is not only that cinema has the capacity to disarticulate time and space in original ways but, moreover, that the questions it begs force us to think about complex temporal regimes. Beyond the issue of allochronism, which could also be interpreted as the film's perfect *synchronism* with anthropological discourse and the colonial rhetoric of the time, the intriguing back-projections of *Tarzan the Ape Man* question (an orthodox vision of) film history in itself. As a matter of fact, the attractional nature of this pre-Code sequence not only disrupts the narrative stance of the film: it also slightly *desynchronizes* the film in relation to a classical film history that reifies the opposition between attractions and narrative film.

Mapping Tarzan and Excavating Back-Projections

Illustrations

67. Jane and her father before the back-projected images of African indigenous peoples in *Tarzan the Ape Man* (W. S. Van Dyke, 1932, MGM).
68. Film still from *Trader Horn* (W. S. Van Dyke, 1931, MGM).
69. "Pygmies facing the camera, Congo," production still from *Trader Horn* (W. S. Van Dyke, 1931, MGM) reproduced in Jean Brunhes' *Races* (1930).
70. "In the country where time doesn't count anymore:" film capture from *Voyage en Angola* (Marcel Borle, 1929), an amateur-ethnographic film shot in Angola by the first Swiss Scientific Mission to Angola.
- 71-72. Exchanging time for pearls: film captures from *White Shadows in the South Seas* (W. S. Van Dyke and Robert Flaherty, 1928, MGM).

Notes

¹ Van Dyke's *Tarzan of the Apes* was released before *King Kong* (1933), which is often mentioned as the first film to use the possibilities of back projection to advantage. What *King Kong* did use for the first time is a then new form of translucent celluloid back-projection screen.

² The film includes other back-projected sequences and some elaborate matte paintings, but they do not have as much pertinence for my argument.

³ See Robert Cannom, *Van Dyke and the Mythical City, Hollywood*, Murray and Gee, Culver City 1948; and Philip J. Ethington, *The Global Spaces of Los Angeles, 1920s-1930s*, in Gyan Prakash, Kevin Kruse (eds.), *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics and Everyday Life*, Princeton University Press, Princeton-Oxford 2008, p. 78.

⁴ With regard to the political situation in Kenya at the time and the conditions of forced labor that these workers probably endured, see Philip J. Ethington, *The Global Spaces of Los Angeles, 1920s-1930s*, cit. The author also discusses the film's extreme violence and the way it evokes American racial issues such as lynching mobs and white suprematism. The film did incur criticism from the Hays Office and various state censorship boards. British Colonial authorities in Singapore even had the film edited out.

⁵ *Idem*, p. 80.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ The film was converted to sound after the departure of the crew for Africa. A sound truck was sent from the US but fell off the ship as it was being unloaded. Close-up dialogue had to be recorded in Los Angeles.

⁸ Jean Brunhes (1869-1932) was one of the founding fathers of human geography, which he taught at the Collège de France. He was also the director of Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète from 1912 on. *Races*, his last book, appeared in the collection *Images du Monde*, directed by Paul Rivet, one of the founders of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris.

⁹ Among other films belonging to the same visual context as *Tarzan the Ape Man*, let us mention the 1927 documentary-melodrama *Chang* (Merian Caldwell Cooper and Ernst Beaumont Schoedsack); and Martin and Osa Johnson's obnoxious "documentaries" such as *Simba: King of the Beasts* (1928),

Wonders of the Congo (1930), *Congorilla* (1932) and *Wings over Africa* (1933).

¹⁰ According Scott Tracy Griffin, the first Tarzan film to have footage shot on location in Africa was *Tarzan's Peril* (1951), produced by Sol Lesser (and partially filmed in East Africa). See Scott Tracy Griffin, *The Centennial Celebration of Tarzan*, Titan Books, London 2012, p. 250.

¹¹ Images photographed for *Trader Horn* were to be used throughout the MGM "Tarzan" series, from *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932) to *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934), *Tarzan Escapes* (1936), *Tarzan Finds a Son!* (1939) and *Tarzan and the Secret Treasure* (1941).

¹² *Trader Horn*, press kit, 1931.

¹³ Trophies are not only visual, since the chants and native drums heard in *Tarzan* were all recorded for *Trader Horn*.

¹⁴ See, for instance, "Tarzan the Ape Man," in *Hollywood Filmograph*, vol. 12, no. 4, 13 February 1932, p. 4; and "Paysages," in *Ciné pour tous*, new series, no. 147, 1 January 1930, unpaginated.

¹⁵ Jane's father mentions the Wakamba, a Bantu ethnic group that lives in the semi-arid regions of eastern Kenya, but the "Karabanda" do not exist. As a matter of fact, the native tribes in the later films of the MGM Tarzan series are usually named after MGM personnel: the Gibbonies (production designer and director Cedric Gibbons); the Hymandies (producer Bernard Hyman); the Zambelis (producer Sam Zimbalist); and the Joconies (production manager J. J. Cohn). See Rudy Behlmer, "Tarzan and MGM: the Rest of the Story," in *American Cinematographer*, February 1987, p. 37. Tarzan's refuge, the Mutia escarpment, was named after the already mentioned Mutia Omoolu, the African actor who played Renchero, Horn's African guide.

¹⁶ With regard to early-20th-century representation of non-Western indigenous peoples in films, see Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye. Race, Cinema and Ethnographic Spectacle*, Duke University Press, Durham 1996. The ethical problems related to the lack of "informed consent" by the filmed subjects to the taking and use of their images by others are discussed in Larry Gross, John Stuart Katz, Jay Ruby (eds.), *Image Ethics. The Moral Rights of Subjects in Photographs, Film and Television*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 1988.

¹⁷ On this subject, see Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, Gilles Böetsch, Éric Deroo, Sandrine Lemaire (eds.), *Zoos humains. Au temps des exhibitions humaines*, La Découverte, Paris 2002; and Sadiya Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade. Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2011.

¹⁸ *Baignade de nègres* (Lumière cat. no. 12); *Nègres en corvée* (Lumière cat. no. 66); *Nègres aschantis*, which consists in an arrangement of different views, *Danse du Sabre* (Lumière cat. no. 441), *Danses de jeunes filles* (Lumière cat. no. 443), *Danse de femmes* (Lumière cat. no. 444), *Danse du féticheur* (Lumière cat. no. 445), *Défilé de la tribu* (Lumière cat. no. 446), *Repas des négrellons I and II* (Lumière cat. no. 447 and 448), *Toilette d'un négrellon I and II* (Lumière cat. no. 449 and 450), *Récréation des négrellons* (Lumière cat. no. 451), *École des négrellons* (Lumière cat. no. 452) and *Baignade de négrellons* (Lumière cat. no. 834).

¹⁹ For a detailed discussion of these two Edison films, see Alison Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference. Cinema, Anthropology and Turn-Of-The-Century Visual Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York 2002, pp. 174-84. Even though Griffiths' book doesn't discuss classical cinema (the author focuses on the period 1894-1915), it provides invaluable information on how early-20th-century Americans encountered images of native peoples.

²⁰ See Raymond Fielding, *The Technique of Special Effects Cinematography*, Focal Press, London-New York 1969, p. 259.

Mapping Tarzan and Excavating Back-Projections

²¹ Raymond Fielding mentions *The Drifter* (1913) as a (lost) film where special effects pioneer Norman O. Dawn allegedly experimented with rear-projection in two scenes. See *The Technique of Special Effects*, p. 261.

²² The use of omni-directional microphones made on-location sound recording a hazardous task, requiring "wind-gags" and, occasionally, reflectors that could reduce background noise pick-up. The latter "was one of the pressures encouraging the change to the shooting of exterior dialogue scenes in the studio, as soon as good background projection made this possible" (Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis*, Starword, London 2009, p. 234).

²³ Among other things, light levels on a background projection screen need to match the light levels of the scenes being filmed in front of it, demanding fast stocks, adequate screen material and/or special background or process projectors, implying pilot-pin registration (fixing and holding film frames tightly) and water-cooling devices. According to Barry Salt, Eastman Kodak introduced the very fine grain Eastman Background Negative in 1933 in order to address some of these problems (*Idem*, p. 215), while the use of back-projected images in Technicolor films, which required high levels of light, did not appear until 1939, when a special, triple background projector was developed by Paramount (*Idem*, p. 220). For a detailed account of the technical challenges posed by rear projection, see Raymond Fielding, *The Technique of Special Effects Cinematography*, cit., pp. 259-205.

²⁴ Producers were particularly keen on the use of back-projections because, unlike location shooting, they allowed for an efficient control over lighting, weather and background noise. See Julie Turnock, "The Screen on the Set: The Problem of Classical Studio Rear Projection," in *Cinema Journal*, vol. 51, no. 2, Winter 2012, pp. 157-162.

²⁵ Clyde Bruckman comically uses back-projected images in a sequence of *The Fatal Glass of Beer* (1933), a parody starring W. C. Fields, produced by Mack Sennett and released by Paramount Pictures.

²⁶ Laura Mulvey, *Rear-projection and the Paradoxes of Hollywood Realism*, in Lúcia Nagib, Chris Perriam, Rajinder Dudrah (eds.), *Theorizing World Cinema*, Tauris, London 2011.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, and Dominique Païni, *The Wandering Gaze: Hitchcock's Use of Transparencies*, in Guy Cogeval, Dominique Paini (eds.), *Fatal Coincidences. Hitchcock and Art*, Mazotta, Milano 2000, pp. 51-78.

²⁸ Louis Marin, *Transparence et opacité de la peinture... du moi*, in Id., *L'Écriture de soi*, PUF, Paris 1999, p. 129.

²⁹ Tom Gunning concludes his famous essay on the cinema of attraction by noting that "effects are tamed attractions." Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," in *Wide Angle*, vol. 8, nos. 3-4, 1986, p. 70.

³⁰ Dominique Païni, *The Wandering Gaze: Hitchcock's Use of Transparencies*, cit., p. 58. The heterogeneity of the back-projected images is much less palpable in *Tarzan and His Mate* (1934), MGM's sequel to *Tarzan the Ape Man*.

³¹ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, Columbia University Press, New York 1983.

³² *Idem*, p. 31.

³³ *Idem*, p. 144.

³⁴ *Idem*, p. 21.

³⁵ Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye. Race, Cinema and Ethnographic Spectacle*, cit.

³⁶ Another relevant sequence is the film's opening sequence: a series of static, photographic shots

depicting what was "for happy centuries the last remnant of an earthly paradise," followed by a long tracking shot showing the effects of civilization: drunk, sick and passive natives, unkept houses and the island trading post where Sebastian cajoles a diver into giving him a pearl by placing a watch on his wrist.

³⁷ John Grierson, "Flaherty's Poetic Moana," in *New York Sun*, 8 February 1926. Reprinted in *Grierson on the Movies*, ed. Forsyth Hardy, Faber and Faber, London-Boston 1981, pp. 23-25.

³⁸ Flaherty had lived in Samoa with his wife Frances and their three children for two years, during the shooting of *Moana*. Frances collaborated to the film and is fully credited as "author" in the opening titles. The filmmaker then went on to write *Tabu* with Murnau. See Jeffrey Geiger, *Facing the Pacific. Polynesia and the U.S. Imperial Imagination*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu 2007.

³⁹ On Van Dyke's experience in Tahiti, see *W.S. Van Dyke's Journal. White Shadows in the South Seas (1927-1928). And Other Van Dyke on Van Dyke* (edited and annotated by Rudy Behlmer), The Scarecrow Press, Lanham-London 1996.

Towards a Technological History of Historiography?

For more than a century, photography and film have been transmitting and disseminating the visible aspects of events, thus forming a visual record of the late 19th and the 20th Century. The impact of the photographic media upon the production of the past is so pervasive that they even serve to regulate, at least in popular reception, what is part of history and not, according to the simple logic that if it isn't photographed or filmed, it didn't happen. This doesn't only apply to historical events recorded by the media "first-hand," so to say, but also to events taking place before the invention of photographic media. These need to be reconstructed by photography, or as it is more common, by films, in order to enter a modern sphere of historical representation. The status of film and photography as historical records does not depend on any distinctions between fiction and actuality, fact or documentary, as the past is produced in all these modes of address. It could even be argued, on a phenomenological level, that individual and social memories are, to a considerable extent, informed by events mediated by technical media, and that even our so-called first-hand experience is subject to the modes of representation constituted by film and photography.

There are many ways of approaching the interrelations between photography, film, and the writing of history. The constructions and the reconstructions of the past through cinematic representations are not the subject for this article. Neither is the writing of film history, as it has appeared in different forms and methodologies for already almost a century. The representations of the past, as well as the production of a history of cinema, are rather symptoms and consequences of a more basic question: how photography and cinema have informed a world view of the past and the present, and produced shifts in the writing of history as well as in historical consciousness at different times. To what extent are written histories shaped and overdetermined by the existence of photographic and cinematic technologies, and can these media produce historical articulations themselves (beyond their obvious representational dimensions)? And, if so, what are the consequences for the concept of history? Can these technical media even be understood as agents in an archaeology of the writing of history?

If the still and moving photographic image has transformed the concept of history, historical consciousness, or

even historiography itself, we need to ask in what way it did so.¹ What is the relationship between the photographic still in its many diverse forms (from early daguerrotypes to the snapshot and sequential photography) and the moving image? Furthermore, there is a distinction to be made between the moving image in the single shot films of the first years of cinema, and the establishment of editing a few years later. Could the forms of montage suscitated by technological shifts – from the advent of sound, colour, and furthermore TV and analog video up to today's digital media – be said to represent ruptures in the history of historiography, in moving images as well as in writing? If one keeps with the thesis that technological shifts inform our sense of history, one must ask what are the effects of the end of photo-chemical inscription and the advent of digital transcription of visual events.

An obvious way in which photography and cinema shape and inform the writing of history is to be found in their shifting role in the archive. If film and photography become part of the archive at a certain time, and in this process transform the archive at every level (in inscription, storage, access, indexing, metadata, etc.), they also transform the historian's use of and reliance on the archive. The technical media do so predominantly by posing the problem of configurations between media. How can the image be a document for the writing of history? How can there be a correct description of an image, and moreover, an image in movement? Movement always eludes verbal description or quotation, as description aims to nail down a meaning of an image and an event, and the film image becomes an unattainable "text."² This disturbing transpositioning of media in the documents of an event in the age of photo-chemical inscription not only transforms the role of the archive, but also the production of history. This is why the image archive becomes a *Counter-Archive*, to follow Paula Amad's analysis of the consequences of multimedia archives for the writing of history, and why the established historical production is severely disturbed by the introduction of film and photography in the archive.³

Photography entertains a complex, even paradoxical relationship with history. On the one hand, it contributes to the shaping of a modern concept of history and historiography, while on the other, it disturbs the production of the historical narrative. The historian in the text-based archive had access to sources that may be contradictory, but they were still produced in the same medium as the historian would use for historical explanations. With the photograph and film archive, the images tell more than the proverbial thousand words. And furthermore, what it tells is often contradictory. Which aspect of the image is relevant for the ongoing investigation? Where shall we look in the image, and how shall we contextualise what we see? How do photographic images relate to written and aural documents in the archive? These and lots of related questions made the photographic media bothersome objects for historical articulations. When the French cameraman Boleslas Matuszewski promoted the film image as a new source of history in 1898, he didn't envision the challenges posed by media transitions in the writing of history. Rather than as a historical document, he saw film as a way to "relive the past," which is an understanding of the past very different from that of historiography: "This simple ribbon of imprinted celluloid constitutes not only a historic document, but a piece of history, a history that has not vanished and need no genie to resuscitate it."⁴ Instead of a document for writing history, the moving image is a piece of history that can still be animated, and for this reason will not forever be assigned to archival immobilisation.

The disturbance presented to the system of history by film and photography should bring us to ask not only what is specific for the history of these technologies, but also how they affect the concept of history itself. With a historicisation of the modern concept of history from a technological perspective, it would be possible to ask how technological shifts inform the concept and the writing of history and how one understands the past. This is not to say that technology is the only motor for shifting concepts of history. There are of course social technologies that intersect with and influence technical media – they do not appear in a void. Technical media, however, constitute a level of access for the analysis of different modes of writing history. To ascribe a "modern" concept of history solely to the emergence of photography would be reductive, since there are social and economic factors behind the

inception of photographic technology. Photography emerges at a given time for several reasons, as for instance because of the social role of the ordinary individual, the anonymous person, who treads into light around this period. The capitalist machinery, on which photography relies but which it also reinforces, forms a larger network for the reconfigurations of time and space, which accommodates photography at this time. In aesthetical terms, many have pointed out how this indiscriminate objectivity of an everyday world first appears within literature or painting.⁵ But at the same time, photography is the factor that furnishes modern history writing with its "model."

In order to escape a historiographical model of beginnings and causality, the photographic must be understood as a dispositive. The dispositive is irreducible to the assemblages of the machines alone, to the discursive practices alone, or to the dominant modes of social life of a period. "A dispositive is, first and foremost, a machine of subjectivisation, and consequently a machine of government," Giorgio Agamben claims.⁶ A technology of the disciplinary age, as analysed by Foucault, photography is part of a network instigating a mode of subjectivity based on submission, on being subject to given institutions and authorities, among which "History" is a primary governmental one. In Foucault's own very general definition of a dispositive: "the strategies of power relations supporting – and supported by – forms of knowledge."⁷ History is arguably a most powerful form of knowledge, and the indexicality of the photographic informs and secures the concepts of objectivity and pastness that supports the authority of history.

Siegfried Kracauer identifies in his last, unfinished book, *History* a coincidence between the formation of the modern concept of history, as it appears around the mid-19th century, and the emergence of photographic technology. He finds in the famous statement by Leopold von Ranke from 1824, where the author aims to show "how things actually were" (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*), a harbinger of this realist approach of modern historiography.⁸ Siegfried Kracauer he points out that the Brockhaus Lexicon makes a connection between photography and historiography as early as in 1840. Kracauer goes on to quote many examples of a photographic discourse on history, either to corroborate its faithfulness, or on the contrary, to distinguish the reasoning of the historian from the superficial snapshot of photography. Kracauer is correct to point out that "such references to the photographic medium would be entirely uncalled for were not the historians making them alert to the possibility that history and photography have something to do with each other after all."⁹

Kracauer finds in Heine's *Lutezia* of 1854 explicit references to photography, as the author compares his reports to "a daguerrotypic history book in which each day entered its own picture," and that the assembling of these pictures creates an authentic faithfulness to life.¹⁰ Kracauer's quote shows not only that the discourse on historiography of the mid-19th century is informed by the new medium of photography, but also that the assembling of photos as an epistemological form of montage is part of this discourse from a very early stage. Kracauer approaches the intersections and interdependencies between film and photography, and history from a much more complicated set of concepts than just pastness and objectivity of the photographic apparatus. He addresses scales, perspectives, framing and most of all, movement. These shifting perspectives and positions of the camera stand as a model for the interdependencies between a macro- and micro-level of history, the bird's view and the fly's. The modern concept of history depends on montage. This montage is, moreover, infused with a photographic terminology, as for instance in the flash that illuminates Kracauer's project described on the very first page of the book: "I realised in a flash the many existing parallels between history and the photographic media, historical reality and camera-reality."¹¹

Archaeography

Not only do technological ruptures instigate "periods" and ages in the writing of history, according to Kracauer, but history becomes itself subject to periodisation based on technology: the history of History follows techno-

logically informed shifts in representation, so the modern concept of history is itself emerging within a specific social and economic context of technological invention. If the modern concept of history was, in part at least, informed by the photographic technology, how do the digital technologies produce a sense of the past? One possible place to start this inquiry is in the automated pattern recognition techniques developed in recent software. The video compression techniques making image files economical to store and to transmit also decompose the image into sections. This allows the software to recognise where there are significant changes in the image, and to update that section of the image while retransmitting the sections in the previous image where no changes have taken place. The MPEG compression techniques update only certain sections of the image where significant changes beyond a defined threshold have occurred. This conflated movement of digital video opens up new means of image analysis that have their own historiographic properties.

These techniques have been developed for the recognition of a set of iconic patterns when it is compared to those in stored in a database. This allows for unexpected juxtapositions and matches between images. This technique may serve an excavation of relations between images from disparate epochs, places and fields of interest. This technique is of course already put to use for policing ends. It has been optimised for biometrical purposes, as facial recognition techniques used in airports and other places of surveillance to trigger a response when there is a match with a face in a pre-established database of wanted persons. While this recognition technique works best with still images, as it has to freeze the image of a face to compare it with the still images in a database, there are also recognition techniques based on movement. The gait analysis is one example, where a certain way of walking can be compared with a set of stored "walks" in a database. There are still lots of shortcomings in this technique, as trajectories, pace, speed, colours and foreground-background factors all complicate the recognition matches. But it would be naïve to think that these shortcomings wouldn't be amended in the future and the technique optimised for more effective surveillance services. This will notably be implemented through combinations between recognition techniques for the still and the moving, where the search for a face can be combined with a given gait in the database.

What has this technique got to do with history and historiography? With the current ubiquity of digital images, where almost every work process, transaction and consumption takes place through the image, the access to the past often proceeds through an analysis of images. With an all-pervasive process of digitisation of analogue images, the past as it is stored and constituted in images becomes accessible for software operations. The software industries recognise the financial and social power aspects of this shift in the access to the image. Bill Gates' Corbis corporation has acquired the legal rights to over a hundred million still images and close to a million video clips to ensure that they can be accessed only through their database. Google has developed similar databases to secure that their search engine retains its Internet monopoly. Every posting on Facebook, including the images, becomes the property of the corporation. This development entails a real transformation in archival techniques, and with it a shift of power over the past from the traditional archival access, which was often administered by the nation state, to the corporate database.

IBM's patented QBIC (Query by Image Content) software is a pattern recognition engine that can excavate iconic analogies between images, and in this process perform an archaeological montage of images that none thought of comparing before. This implies a search in a database that is not based on linguistic metadata, as the name of a person or a place, an event or a year. Instead, the retrieval of images proceeds through iconic criteria. The historian's work in the archive has for a long time had to engage with pictures, but they could still be accessed according to the established linguistic criteria of categories, names, places and dates. With the automated recognition techniques, images are searched and retrieved through other images. This contributes to a shift in the historian's craft from a linguistically based access to the past to a procedure where the image is also a historiographic medium. These techniques have been adopted for the writing of film history. One tool for image analysis and database

visualisation is the Cinemetrix software.¹² It allows for the calculation and comparison of shot length and scale within a film as well as between films. The average shot length (ASL) analysis developed by the Cinemetrix software is not yet historiography. If the ASL of *Intolerance* from 1916 is 5,9 sec., this is only a fact of the past, and not a historical fact. In order for it to turn into history, it needs to be related to other facts and theories. For instance, if this ASL is shorter than the average in the 1910s or the 1930s, it may be explained by economic factors, as by the huge budget of the film compared to the average film production of the 1910s, or by technical ones, like the impact the coming of sound had on editing in the early 1930s. As a tool for writing film history, there is little new in this except for a means for quantification of data to make these kinds of historical articulations more precise. A considerable work in this field has already been undertaken manually by film historians as Tom Gunning, Barry Salt, David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson.

The software opens, however, new possibilities of film style studies when it is developed and applied not only to editing structure, but also to the use of colour, speech and motion. When it calculates the degree of motion within the shot, colour saturation and sound intensities, it ventures into domains that haven't been accessible for human observation earlier. The motion detection depends on the change in the blocks of pixels already calculated in the MPEG video compression standards, and entails a comparison between the frames in succession. Taken together, these factors allow for establishing general characteristics of a film, and its separate sequences, that can be visualised as a map, or as an innovative film student has named it, "fingerprints," of a film.¹³ Through this technique of visualisation, comparisons are made between films that go far beyond the tables, charts and diagrams deployed already by Dziga Vertov and others in the 1920s and more recently by film scholars as Vlada Petric, Barry Salt and Yuri Tsivian.¹⁴ Instead, the visualisation creates a synchronic mapping of these properties of different films and allows for juxtapositions as a means of comparison.

Many of the same properties are present in the software developed under the heading of Cultural Analytics.¹⁵ As a technique for the analysis and visualisation of "big data" in the field of art history, computer games and graphic design, it is not primarily developed for film studies. As software is always subject to (re-)programming, it has been used for the excavation and statistical calculation of such features as light intensities and the amount of angles and edges in the picture. The software of both Cinemetrix and Cultural Analytics works on two different levels that entail interesting consequences both for film historiography and for historical articulations in general. The technique of analysis excavates properties of a film that go beyond human ocular or aural analysis, and even human observation altogether. The software attains a level of analysis that excavates in a film properties that human historians cannot see or hear. The algorithmic historian can detect analogies and connections between films through pattern recognition in databases. Applied to "big data," entirely new criteria of comparison as well as matches between shots, sequences and films may result from this analysis. Besides analysis, this is also a software for visualisation. On this level, Cinemetrix and Cultural Analytics allow for the juxtaposition of maps, or fingerprints, of films that convey editing patterns, sound intensities, degrees of movement and colour saturation, together with other properties, in one synchronic, yet moving, representation. On both the levels of analysis and visualisation do we find techniques of retrieval and comparison that are embedded in the software rather than in the human historian's means of observation and interpretation.

The key issue here is not if this changes film historiography, but if it changes historiography in large: "Almost everything" exists as digital image files these days. With the past digitised, it can be accessed within a certain mode of comparison. This way, algorithms change historiography itself, as they encourage historical juxtapositions across established categories like epochs, areas and genres. If film and photography inform the modern historical consciousness, to follow Kracauer, the way they are recognised, retrieved and juxtaposed changes with this software. Applied in a different context than film history, however, automatic pattern recognition and the software developed by Cinemetrix and Cultural Analytics begins to regulate the approach to the past alto-

gether, as it starts to make connections and juxtapositions, which used to be the domain of historians. This epistemological, if not cinematic, montage proceeds initially through automated analyses of images, even in the cases where the analogies established are circumscribed and embedded in traditional, written historical articulations. It marks a decisive rupture in historiography through the agent of observation. Where the film (style) historian had made his observations through screenings or at the editing table, Cultural Analytics introduces non-anthropological observation as a historiographical production. Historiography traditionally lies with the human agent, to the extent that there is such a thing isolated from the writing tools we employ. Cultural analytics and Cinemetrix instead deploy the algorithms to make the observations – and consequently they diverge from what humans see in films.

The German media scholar Wolfgang Ernst speaks of a media archaeography when machines themselves start to perform articulations of the past through juxtapositions and montage.¹⁶ His example is the excavation of sound inscriptions in early sound recordings through computerised optical readings, i.e. techniques able to reconstruct the sound inscribed in these analogue media. As we have seen, very similar processes are at hand for visual excavations. This leads one to speculate if the shift from the modern historiography informed by the photographic technology is giving way to an archaeographic approach to the past. The latter approach is not aimed at the production of linear historical narratives of modern historiographies, but instead at articulations about the past produced by the technological dispositives themselves. This shift calls for an archaeology of technical media as means for shaping historiographic concepts.

Historiography may still lie with the human agent and be articulated in the linear mode of writing. To be turned into historiography, the algorithmic analyses and visualisations of Cultural Analytics and Cinemetrix may need to be articulated in linear writing. With algorithmic techniques, we are rather in the domain of archaeology or archaeography as the principle of knowledge production of the past. However, the comparative aspect lies with the algorithms rather than the human observer. The algorithmic production of the past only comes at the price of a transformed concept of history. This transformation is not new as such, as it was also the case with the transformation of the concept of history exerted by photography, according to Kracauer. But these two ruptures are not of the same kind. Algorithms start to produce historiography themselves, as they are no longer just an auxiliary for visualising the historian's findings. This calls for an analysis and critical interrogation of the software, the same way as the historian examines the concepts used for writing history. A technological history of historiography should also entail a critical assessment of its tools – the algorithms producing the past today.

Notes

¹ It would require a lengthy study to argue such a relationship between the modern concept of history, historiography and photographic technologies. The scholar who has most convincingly developed these connections is Siegfried Kracauer, who does so in a number of texts, but most consistently in his last, unfinished work: Siegfried Kracauer, *History. The Last Things Before The Last*, Markus Wiener, Princeton, NJ 1995 [1969].

² Raymond Bellour, "Le Texte introuvable," in *Ça cinéma*, nos. 7-8, 1975. In English: *The Unattainable Text*, in Constance Penley (ed.), *The Analysis of Film*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington-Indianapolis 2001, pp. 21-27.

³ Paula Amad, *Counter-Archive. Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète*, Columbia University Press, New York 2010, p. 34.

⁴ Boleslas Matuszewski, "A New Source of History" ["*Une nouvelle source de l'histoire*," 1898], in *Film History*, vol. 7, no. 4, 1995, pp. 322-324.

⁵ Jacques Rancière, *La Partage du sensible. Esthétique et politique*, La Fabrique, Paris 2000, pp. 46-48.

⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *Qu'est-ce qu'un dispositif?*, Payot & Rivages, Paris 2007, p. 42.

⁷ Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, vol. 3, Gallimard, Paris 1994, p. 299.

⁸ Siegfried Kracauer, *History. The Last Things Before The Last*, Markus Wiener, Princeton, NJ 1995 [1969], pp. 48-52.

⁹ *Idem*, p. 51.

¹⁰ *Idem*, p. 49.

¹¹ *Idem*, pp. 3-4.

¹² <http://www.cinemetrics.lv>. For an applied study using this software, see Yuri Tsivian, "Intolerance Study," where Griffith's film's four intertwined story lines are analysed and compared regarding average shot length (ASL), <http://www.cinemetrics.lv/tsivian.php>, last visit September 2014.

¹³ See Frederic Brodbeck's bachelor graduation project at the Royal Academy of Arts (KABK), Den Haag: <http://cinemetrics.fredericbrodbeck.de>, last visit September 2014. The evocative concept of the visualisation of a film as a *fingerprint* implies that this is a unique characteristic of every film, which in turn makes it (an) individual, and foregrounds the forensical and indexical properties at work in the technique of analysis.

¹⁴ For a collection of documents of Vertov's work in charts and diagrams, see: Yuri Tsivian (ed.), *Lines of Resistance. Dziga Vertov and the Twenties*, Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, Sacile-Pordenone 2004, pp. 109-114. Vlada Petric deploys a number of graphic representations, charts and tables to access the movement and montage structure of Vertov's film: Vlada Petric, *Constructivism in Film: The Man with the Movie Camera. A Cinematic Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1987. For a theoretical discussion of the implications of various techniques for analyzing movement in the frame and in montage, see: Trond Lundemo, *Quoting Motion: The Frame, the Shot and Digital Video*, in Angela Dalle Vacche (ed.), *Film, Art, New Media: The Museum Without Walls?*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2012, pp. 97-114.

¹⁵ <http://lab.softwarestudies.com/p/cultural-analytics.html>, last visit September 2014.

¹⁶ Wolfgang Ernst, *Media Archaeography: Method and Machine versus History and Narrative of Media*, in Erkki Huhtamo, Jussi Parikka (eds.), *Media Archaeology. Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, University of California Press, Los Angeles 2011, pp. 239-255.

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Film History “in the Making:” On Fact Production and Film Historiography in Digital Humanities Laboratories

Introduction: film history and computational techniques

The current period’s “digital turn” witnesses a renegotiation of research methodologies in the humanities. In universities world-wide, research laboratories are established in Humanities departments, in which scholars develop digital research tools and methods to analyze and visualize digitized corpora with.¹ This development also affects film and media studies where research on film history is increasingly produced, contemplated and validated using computational techniques to analyse digitised films and related materials to create data visualizations.

These approaches support a notion of film as a historical object of study, that differs remarkably from previous conceptions. When Polish photographer Boleslas Matuszewski in his by now famous pamphlets *Une nouvelle source de l'histoire* and *La Photographie animée, ce qu'elle est ce qu'elle doit être* (both 1898) defined film as a potential official state document which could veraciously register political transactions, scientific operations and criminals he nodded to the positivist historiography of the French *école méthodique* and its ideal of archives as crucial stakeholders in building nation-states.² In the 1920s, surrealist *cinephiles*, film theorists and collectors defined films as art works by claiming the sublime experience of *photogénie* to envision film history as an art history with its own masterpieces and authors laying out a path for *cinephiles* in the decades to come.³ Academic scholars in the 1970s increasingly defined film as a cultural object with a distribution history framed in different settings, regarding each film print as holding its own specific history.⁴

Digital scholarship on film history differs from these notions in that it renders the historical study of film increasingly statistic and algorithmic. For historians who use digital tools of analysis film is, in its digital avatar, a text which can be quantified and serialized with software to summarize and convey its central features in diagrams. In recent years, an emblematic example of this development is the Cinemetrics software conceived by film historian and professor at the University of Chicago Yuri Tsivian and computer scientist Gunars Cijvans.

The Cinemetrics software propagates a quantitative, textual approach to the study of cinema and historical developments in film style, by enabling scholars to count and comparatively study cutting rates with greater exactitude.⁵ Arguing that metrics, as in poetry, matters in films, the software privileges for example shot length duration as a central parameter in style analysis. Inarguably, this lies in extension of the kind of stylistic film history and scientific realism which Barry Salt pleaded for in his classic study *Film Style: History and Analysis* and can be seen to some extent as an automation of Salt's manual approach to counting Average Shot Lengths (ASL).⁶ Yet, Cinemetrics also differs from Salt's approach in that it relies on databases to structure its empirical research and in its use of custom software to generate diagrams to present its research results.⁷ This latter feature in particular relates to current experimental uses of visualizations as a representational practice in film historical research, for example media theorist Lev Manovich's Image Plot used for the study of color patterns, or the more recent ACTION - Tools for Cinematic Information Retrieval developed by Michael Casey, Mark Williams and Tom Stoll at Dartmouth college, for the analysis of color, sound and movement (see Table 1).⁸ Consequently, as I will argue in this article, to understand the implications of digitisation for film historiography, it is necessary to carefully consider the role which diagrams play in digital film historical scholarship and attend to the dynamics of their development. To this end, I contend that there is a need to reconsider current theorizations of digital audiovisual archives in historical research and reframe them from a more process-oriented perspective while drawing on debates on (film) historiography which emerged in the 1970s.

Digital film history: scientism vs. stochastics and the medium as method

While yet relatively sparse, contemporary debates in film and media studies have yielded antagonistic responses to the implications of digital archives and techniques for film historiography and for historical epistemology in general. In the specific case of Cinemetrics, Tsivian emphasizes that shot measurement becomes more accurate with digital tools than film viewing previously enabled, for which reason he regards Cinemetrics as lending greater scientificity to stylistic film history. Consequently Tsivian suggests, that the statistics generated by using Cinemetrics reaffirms old research questions and attributes the underlying assumptions of stylistic film history increased evidential status.⁹

In stark contrast to this view, media archaeologist Wolfgang Ernst has argued that the mathematizing, algorithmic properties of digitised audiovisual archives have the opposite effect upon historical knowledge. Speaking from a post-hermeneutical position, in the tradition of Kittlerian media theory, Ernst's response downplays how human meaning-making processes make sense of digital archives to produce historical knowledge, focusing instead on the digital archive's material substrata below the semantic level. On this level, Ernst identifies a form of memory and temporality which is specific to the digital archive, to argue that digital archives are characterized by a techno-mathematical, stochastic essence which exposes the contingency of history and causal relations between digitised sources.¹⁰ In a database, Ernst points out, hyperlinks between documents are constantly refreshed, just as new ones are added. Thus, when digitised and entered into a database, a source is stripped of its historically constituted narratives because it becomes part of a network of constantly changing relations to other digitised documents. Consequently, Ernst argues, digital sources cannot be regarded as stable referents but must be considered as constantly changing entities.¹¹ Nodding to the meta-historical stance of historian and literary theorist Hayden White – Ernst therefore considers digital archives essentially *ironic* because they are stochastic, and as an end point for historical narration.¹² Thus, rather than enabling scholars to assert historical knowledge scientifically as suggested by Tsivian, digitisation in Ernst's view renders historical sources inherently dynamic, and subject to constant change.¹³

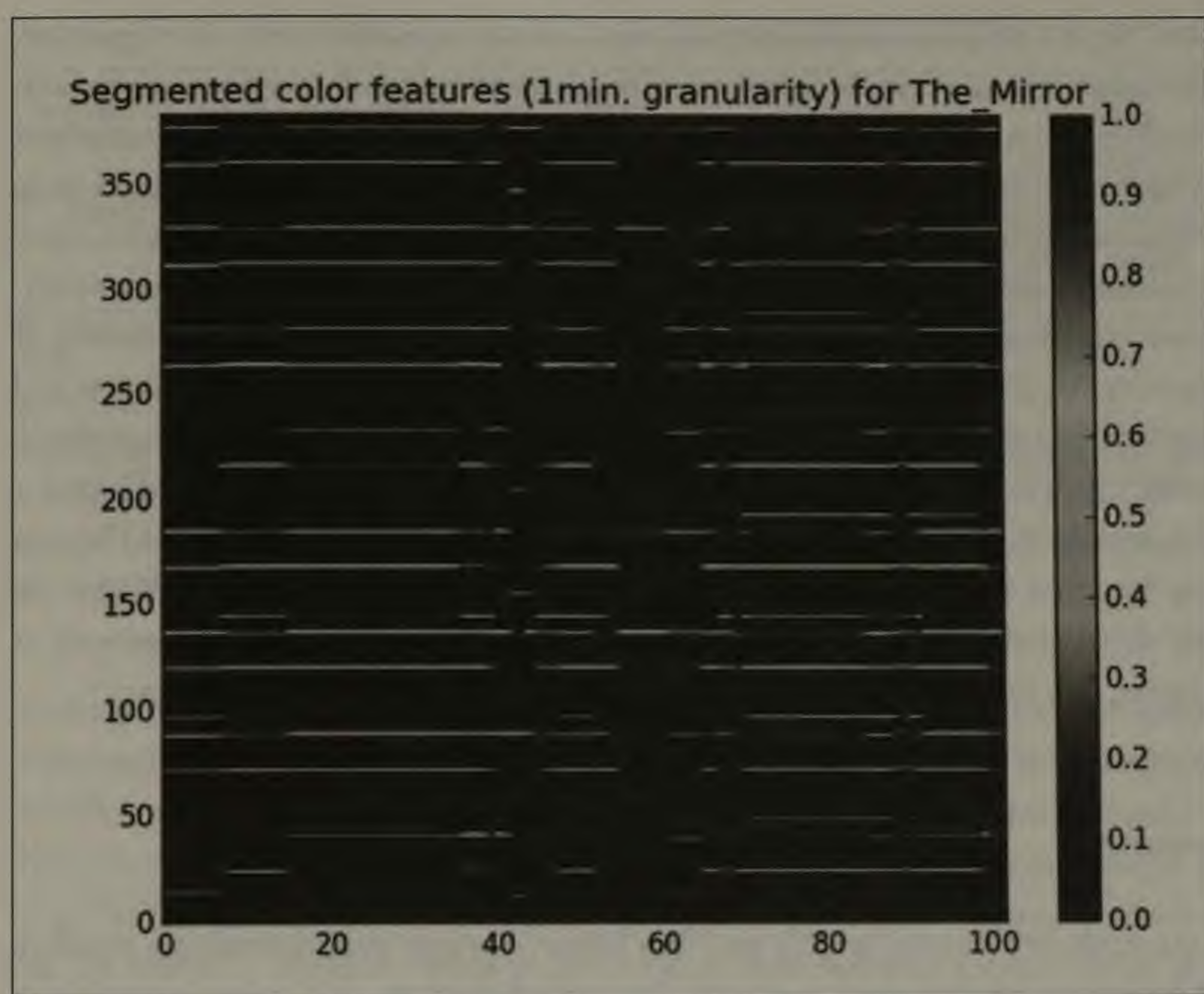


Table 1. ACTION visualization of colours in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Zerkalo* (*The Mirror*, 1975).

Roughly, these positions can be said to represent two dominant understandings of the epistemological implications of digitisation for film historiography. Proffering respectively a new scientist positivism and stochastics they constitute an antagonistic interpretive field for understanding this technological change's implications for film historical scholarship. Yet, in spite of their evident differences, what these positions can be said to share is a primarily technicist and formalist understanding of technological agency, a belief in the *deus in machina*, to identify the consequences of digitisation for historiography.¹⁴ Both positions do not attend extensively to the processes through which digital techniques come into being nor acknowledge that archival and research practice, also in the digital age, are situated in specific institutional contexts which follow specific scientific norms. This emphasis, I would argue, blocks for developing a more multi-faceted understanding of how digital, scholarly practices are developed in research laboratories, and for developing a detailed overview of contemporary historical assumptions in digital scholarship to nurture a critical discussion of them. In this respect, I share the plea recently put forward by media scholar Nanna Verhoeff with regard to digital techniques that "The medium as a tool to think *with* is also something to think *about*," which calls for closer attention to the ways in which design processes of tools reflect historical imaginaries in digital research.¹⁵ By playfully rephrasing Marshall McLuhan's famous phrase that "The Medium Is the Message" into the "The Medium Is the Method," Verhoeff argues for a necessity to complement a medium-specific perspective with an understanding of the collaborative process between for example archivists and designers in tool-building to understand how digital historical traces are produced.¹⁶ In doing so Verhoeff indicates an alternative path which interrogates the creation of analytical techniques in closer relation to different culturally sustained imaginations of historiography to understand how the latter negotiates and formalizes the specificities of the former. To follow this path would therefore entail bridging an understanding of digital media specificities with a broader understanding of theory of history.

To this end, I would argue, that Ernst's response to digitisation can serve as a fruitful point of departure, because it identifies how digital materialities also produce historical contingencies, but that it needs to be supplemented by a more detailed understanding of how scholars establish different historiographies through their material practices. Ernst's reinvigoration of Hayden White's theory does for example not propose, as does White, a typology of different historical modes of scholarship, but identifies only one mode, the reflexive, ironic mode. A way in which this position could be developed further, I would argue, could therefore be to combine to a greater degree Ernst's material focus which underlines technological agency with an understanding of the social appropriations of technology in different research contexts, to understand how digital techniques and tools of visualization sustain specific historical views and reflect the specificity of the places they emerge from. To do so, I find it helpful to revisit 1970s debates on film historiography to propose a different coordinate for our conceptualization of digital practices. In this regard, while I am highly sympathetic to Ernst's use of Hayden White, I will suggest that it may be more productive at this stage to look to historians such as a Michel de Certeau, whose theory of history developed in the 1970s addressed both material and institutional aspects of the use of computational techniques, in a period when such techniques were just entering the academy.

Meta-history in 1970s film historiography

In the 1970s when film studies curricula proliferated widely and film history became institutionalized, scholars increasingly turned to theory of history to develop their methods. For some historians, this move was made to surpass earlier forms of film history by making it empirically sound and scientific through more carefully conceived archival research.¹⁷ For others, it introduced a theoretical reflection on the contingency of history writing from a reflexive position, which distanced itself from positivist approaches to imagine alternative paths for film historiography and excavate neglected histories that problematized the very notion of history.¹⁸ Emerging from contemporary Marxist film criticism, new historical epistemologies belonging to the latter were prominently introduced in for example Jean-Louis Comolli's and Jean-Louis Baudry's "apparatus theory" in the early 1970s, which among other things fundamentally questioned the origins of cinema as rooted mainly in late 19th-century scientific practice.

In this period, a work such as Hayden White's seminal *Metahistory: Historical Imagination in the Nineteenth Century* informed scholarly endeavours to rethink film historiography, while – as noted by Dana Polan in retrospect – White's stance was perhaps not always being rigorously followed in practice.¹⁹ White's *Metahistory* proposed an ironic, reflexive stance which saw no grounding for history, but instead analysed historiography as sharing affinities with literary fiction, as emplotted into different modes and chains of causality to explain historical events.²⁰ An illustrative example of the repercussions of White's meta-history in film studies can be seen in Edward Branigan's article "Color and Cinema: Problems in the Writing of History" from 1979, which sought to understand and compare different histories of colour in cinema from a meta-historical perspective.²¹ The article presents a table which outlines different film histories up to then into different "types of inquiry" to elucidate how different historians had tackled the history of film colors by emphasizing different historical dynamics and agents (see Table 2). The film history of Patrick Ogle is labelled as *adventure history* in the middle with its emphasis on inventors and cinematographers, in opposition to Jean-Louis Comolli's film history driven by Marxist dialectics. Contemporary digital scholarship, I would argue, needs to develop a similar perspective on its practices as the one Branigan establishes, to expand the current discussion's scope and achieve a more detailed understanding of how historical positions are being recast. While not proposing that it is possible to create an exhaustive, analytical overview of digital film historiography, as the table's format may suggest, meta-historical thinking, might

A comparison of the assumptions of four types of historical inquiry				
ASPECTS OF HISTORICAL TIME	RAMSAYE adventure history	OGLE technical history	GOMERY industrial history	COMOLLI ideological history
CAUSE	Linear (events, anecdotes; neo-Aristotelian unities)	Relations among Technologies (science)	Economic Context (long-run profits); industrial organization theory)	Social and Economic Context (Marxist economic theory)
CHANGE	Evolution (birth, growth, death)	Perfection of technique	Economic Cycle (invention, innovation, diffusion)	Marxist Class (dialectical change)
SUBJECT (role of individual)	Organic Metaphor and Anecdotes about Individuals (psychology)	Inventors and Cinematographers	Creative Management	Member of Economic Class and Subject in Ideology

Table 2. Table from Edward Branigan's "Color and Cinema: Problems in the Writing of History" showing different emplotments of film history. Source: Edward Branigan, "Color and Cinema: Problems in the Writing of History," in *Film Reader 4* (1979).

again provide a fruitful point of departure, while being mindful that the specific example of Branigan's table remains limited to literary conventions of historiography. Digital film historiography, with its algorithmic operations is produced in different ways and the use of diagrams inarguably marks a shift in representational practice which needs careful consideration. With regard to the use of diagrams in historical research, digital historian David J. Staley has for example pointed out, that such a form of representation tends to work by synthesis, by bringing together events in 'thick depictions' without a linear mode of access.²² Consequently, a meta-discussion of digital film historiography prompts a reflection on just how diagrams are produced and what role they play in structuring, validating and presenting historical knowledge. To analyse these processes, as I will argue in the next section, I find it particularly helpful to depart from art historians Michael Bender and Michael Marrinan's approach to diagrams which implies "giving up the notion that they are simply abstractions of reality, stripped down versions of the world of experience" and understand them as a "historiographical operation" situated in a laboratory context.²³

Film historiography in the digital humanities laboratory

One way to discern a broader range of positions in digital film historiography could be to think in the lineage of theorists of history who, in contrast to Hayden White, go beyond textual systems of representation to look at places of production as key to the development of historical abstractions. In this regard, analysing historiography would no longer simply be a matter of considering history as a language system, but also necessitate an understanding of new forms of knowledge production and dissemination, with attention to the places from which digital tools emanate from as a conditioning factor for historical claims to truth and science. As new media scholars Theo Röhle and Bernhard Rieder remind us, while the sciences have made use of laboratories for centuries, the humanities only began to do so in the 1960s – in history, in the social and political sciences and in a wider range of disciplines of the arts, such as now film history, where mechanizing equipment increasingly function as heuristic tools in methodological chains.²⁴ In this aspect, the emergence of digital humanities laboratories can be said to reflect that the humanities is increasingly adopting practices from the sciences to function as a form of technoscience in order to produce its research results. In this regard, Michel de Certeau's theory of history, with its characterisation of the historian's work space as a laboratory in which the technical practice occupies a central role in a "historiographical operation," seems particularly adequate for analysing processes of tool development. Developed in Certeau's *The Writing of History* the notion of "historiographical

operation," is attentive to how historians *make* history as the collective work effort of a factory or a laboratory with equal emphasis on social and technical dynamics; a notion which regards history as a tripartite "operation" between 1. a social place of production and erudition, 2. a practice manifested through a set of technical procedures and 3. an edited end product, a publication.²⁵ The notion of "practice" in this division regards techniques – whether a role of papyrus or a computer – as more than mere auxiliary means, but as constitutive of historiography. In this respect Certeau is, as Ernst, mindful of the materiality of historiography, but always sees it in intricate relation to its social appropriation and processes of development to understand how scholars formalize their tools of analysis and establish a more heterogeneous overview of appropriations and positions. To apply this perspective, I would argue, could open to a more multi-faceted understanding of how the material means of knowledge production – also quantitative methods as in the case of Cinemetrics is negotiated in relation to a scientific norms, which mobilizes both present and past scholarship. I would like now to briefly show how this could be done with regard to Cinemetrics with attention to the presentation of the software on its website and the scholarship it draws upon.

Cinemetrics: factory of FACT/laboratory of fiction

As sketched above, Cinemetrics occupies a position, which regards digital tools as providing a more scientific grounding for film historiography. Created by film historian Yuri Tsivian and indebted to Barry Salt's stylo-metric approach, it has become a successful method for digital stylistic analysis, which has been picked up by several noted film historians such as David Bordwell or Charles O'Brien.²⁶ Cinemetrics is a semi-automatic software which enables the comparative analysis of film editing and style by registering cutting rates, with the aim of generating statistics and gathering it into a database which by listing individual titles allows for the comparison of films using cutting rates as a parameter. The creation of this database is seen to enhance an understanding of film art's development as a poetic art form. As the presentation of Cinemetrics stresses, the rationale behind the software is, that film – as literature – is an art form which relies on careful composition of specific durations of textual segments. In this regard Cinemetrics, as the website's introductory text stresses, enables the unearthing of the film medium's structural development over time, from D. W. Griffith to Peter Kubelka's metric cinema. Currently the database counts approximately 15,000 film titles, but also television programs and music videos.²⁷ Tsivian regards the ability to create such a database as a more scientific position than previous scholarship, as it depicts these developments with greater accuracy because of its advanced software and computational statistics.²⁸ It is no coincidence that the newest version of the Cinemetrics software is entitled Frame Accurate Cinemetrics Tool, which creates the acronym FACT.

However, if one chooses not to go along with the scientific realism proffered by this acronym – not as a way of proving it either wrong or right – but instead consider Cinemetrics as pertaining to a social context and erudition, one may develop a more detailed insight into how the method's material practice has been produced. Yuri Tsivian indicates that the method is picked up mainly, but not uniquely, by scholars with a concentration in North America who – one can conclude – are predominantly interested in for example neo-formalist and stylistic, textual analysis.²⁹ In this respect the tool has a doctrinal affiliation, in which cutting rates is traditionally a privileged parameter for the stylistic analysis of cinema, and which lends scientificity to Cinemetrics. The dynamics of this affiliation is however complex and cannot solely be discerned by a look at its most noted users; a tour through Cinemetrics website invites going a bit further back in time and stages an encounter between the software and the way in which film historians once imagined and practiced style analysis, to reveal its pre-digital and hermeneutic antecedents.



Table 3. Cinemetrics visualization of cutting rates in Dziga Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera* (Soviet Union, 1929) generated from film historian Vlada Petric's manual shot break-down.

One interesting feature of the Cinemetrics website, is for example the inclusion of previously unpublished shot outlines of Dziga Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera* made by prominent Soviet cinema scholar and founding curator of the Harvard Film Archive Vlada Petric.³⁰ The material, which Petric made manually in the late 1980s with the intention of publishing it as a part of his classic 1987-book *Constructivism in Film: The Man With a Movie Camera. A Cinematic Analysis*³¹ has been transcribed in order to be able to process it with the Cinemetrics software to generate a visualization of the film's cutting rate (see Table 3). As the comment to Petric's text provided by film historian and archivist Adelheid Heftberger emphasizes, the circumstance that it has remained unpublished until it went online illustrates how this kind of cinematic analysis, was not supported by publishers, but has developed slowly through the work of generations to come to fruition. In this regard, the Cinemetrics website invokes tradition and suggests the emancipation of a particular way of doing film history with its software.

One may follow this connection to Petric's scholarship a bit further, by digging out earlier texts which he wrote in the mid-1970s which Cinemetrics' do not include, to give a more detailed understanding of its vision of stylistic film history. In hindsight, it is interesting to note for example that Petric's writings in this period – a period in which he was setting up and developing a film studies curriculum at Harvard University – among other things strived to articulate a visually anchored film history, which to a greater degree relied on film prints as sources for understanding film style and editing. In the 1970s, Petric imagined a film history based on the meticulous study of cinematic structure, which should involve film archives in a much more active role than previously seen.³²

The premise for Petric's argument was, that the most prominent film histories up till then – the film histories of Georges Sadoul, Lewis Jacobs and Lotte Eisner – had been too inaccurate in their discussions of film editing, because they showed only little attention to discerning editing patterns with exactitude and to study their development over time. Petric argued that a reason for this was that film historians did not work extensively with film prints in their research, as they simply could not access them. He therefore plead that scholars should be granted much more ample research opportunities in film archives, to be able to create extensive shot outlines as the basis for studying stylistic developments in film history with greater accuracy. This was a view which Petric propagated in several significant institutional contexts. It was for example presented in a paper at the 1974 conference of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) in Ottawa and Montréal themed *Film Archives and Audiovisual Techniques/The Methodology of Film History* of which the proceedings were later published in a special issue of the then Society for Cinema Studies' *Cinema Journal* in 1975. In Petric's contribution entitled *From a Written History of Film to a Visual History of Film*, he articulates the necessity and the obstacle for realizing a visual film history in the following way:

*the appropriate methodology of film history cannot be attained in our time without the full cooperation of the film archives, which possess the prints and have access to technical facilities, without which it is impossible to grasp the cinematic structure of a film.*³³

In retrospect, this is clearly a vision of film history which resonates with the scope of Cinemetrics, but which was unsuccessful in the mid-1970s, as both Petric's and Heftberger's comments stress. But while this particular text is rarely cited in today's discussions on film historiography, it seems, one could argue, to gain new relevance with a project such as Cinemetrics which suggests to be a continuation of and one may say even an emancipation of Petric's practice, by creating a link to his unpublished scholarship and by processing it anew.

This circumstance, I would argue, exposes an interplay of social and material agents which may elucidate how film historians develop and use digital tools to construct and mediate film historical knowledge today. And it seems to underscore the point, as sociologists Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar have argued, that the use and development of scientific computer diagrams in research laboratories always depend upon a research environment's literary inscriptions of knowledge, such as papers and articles, to which it provides evidence and upon which tools are in turn constructed.³⁴ Seen from this perspective, one can argue that Cinemetrics, by mobilizing a tentative vision such as Petric's which once could not be published and by processing it anew, constructs and invokes a tradition of film historiography in a way which lends scientificity and evidential status to the visualizations which the software generates. The inclusion of Petric's unpublished shot outlines in the context of Cinemetrics, which is today a successful tool for film historical research that has been picked up by distinguished film historians, makes Petric's effort appear as hitherto misunderstood and as having reached a logical end point with Cinemetrics. From this vantage point, the success of Cinemetrics appears then to have less to do with the visualization of hidden cinematic structures, which are unearthed by computational statistics and forms of visualization, but as a form of film history which has been several decades "in the making." The graphs and overviews of historical developments in film editing which the tool generates is the result of the purification of an inscription device, that relies on a specific, institutionalized vision of how mathematizing, quantitative methods can provide evidential status and facts in film historical research.

Conclusively, one can question the scientist, realist position with which Cinemetrics associates itself through its FACT acronym. To play a pun on this acronym by alluding to a catchphrase of Vertovian film theory which to a great degree informs Cinemetric's vision of film history one could say that Cinemetrics is not merely a "Factory of FACT" in which cinematic structures and historical patterns hitherto hidden to the human are revealed in a spirit akin to Vertov's kino-eye.³⁵ On the contrary, Cinemetrics is just as much the result of a laboratory which, as Certeau and Latour would have it, creates a "science fiction" through the dynamics of its fact production.³⁶ These dynamics of fact production while "in the making," I would argue, are important to attend to if we wish to create a heterogeneous overview of the positions currently emerging in digital film historical scholarship in order to go beyond the binary positions – scientism versus stochastics – which dominate the current discussion to critically discuss the use of digital tools and engage in using them.

Conclusion: mapping digital film historiography

In this article I have addressed the current development in film and media studies, which sees a tendency to conduct research in digital humanities laboratories with computational techniques and to disseminate research results in the forms of visualizations. Critically addressing claims to respectively scientism and increased contingency as a primary consequence of digitisation of audiovisual archives, I have proposed a combination of the

theory of history of Michel de Certeau and Science and Technology Studies as an alternative interpretive field which may expose the social and material dynamics of producing and disseminating digital film historical knowledge while "in the making." Through the specific case of Cinemetrics, I have looked at how the mobilization of literary inscriptions lend scientificity to techniques, and how techniques in turn render scholarship evidential, to suggest that just as much as scholars need to come to terms with digital materialities and representational practices they also need to be mindful of the institutions that shape digital tools in order to be able to map the historical positions which are emerging and to mediate between them in their discussions, beyond the current antagonistic divide.

Thus, by regarding digital film historiography as the result of the work of a laboratory or a factory, I would argue, one may begin to discern and map a field of "digital film historiography" – an overview of scholarly research projects that reconceptualize film historiography by applying and developing digital tools – while thinking about how they pertain to and recast the historical scholarship of the academic *milieux* they emanate from. A quick glance suggests for example that there are regional trends in digital scholarship. In Germany and Russia (for example a project such as the Hyperkino DVD editions) and Italy (the scholarly discussions of the University of Udine's FilmForum), there is a strong emphasis on developing historical-critical annotations of films in databases and on DVD editions drawing on academic contexts which traditionally also have an interest in for example the study of multiple language versions of films, film restoration theory and film philology. In the UK (a project such as Early Cinema in Scotland), Australia (Kinomatics), Belgium (the HOMER Project) and the Netherlands (Cinemacontext), there is a stronger, though not exclusive focus, on socio-economic histories of film with the use of for example GIS tools to map patterns in cinema-going which also reflect university traditions in these countries. A future investigation of digital film historiography could elucidate the dynamics of these specific forms of scholarship in their institutional contexts and begin to ask how the development of digital tools mobilize, add to and advance existing scholarship, while perhaps considering some of the points I have laid out in this article on fact production in the digital humanities laboratory.

Notes

¹ Patrik Svensson, "Envisioning the Digital Humanities," in *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2012.

² Paula Amad, *Counter-Archive. Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète*, Columbia University Press, New York 2010, p. 145.

³ Christophe Gauthier, *La Passion du Cinéma. Cinéphilies, ciné-clubs et salles spécialisées à Paris de 1920 à 1929*, AFRHC, École des Chartres, Paris-Chartres, 1999, p. 65.

⁴ Charles Musser, "Historiographic Method and the Study of Early Cinema," in *Cinema Journal*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2004, p. 103.

⁵ See www.cinemetrics.lv, last visit 12 June 2014.

⁶ Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis*, Starword, London 1983, p. 1.

⁷ Id., "The Metrics in Cinemetrics," 2006, http://www.cinemetrics.lv/metrics_in_cinemetrics.php, last visit 15 December 2014.

⁸ See <http://bregman.dartmouth.edu/~action/>, last visit 12 June 2014.

⁹ Yuri Tsivian, *Cinemetrics. Part of the Humanities' Cyberinfrastructure*, in Michael Ross, Manfred Grauer, Bernd Freisleben (eds.), *Digital Tools in Media Studies: Analysis and Research. An Overview*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2009, p. 101.

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- ¹⁰ Jussi Parikka, "Operative Media Archaeology: Wolfgang Ernst's Materialist Media Diagrammatics," in *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 28, no. 52, 2011, p. 56.
- ¹¹ *Idem*, p. 87.
- ¹² Wolfgang Ernst, *Digital Memory and the Archive*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis-London 2012, p. 58.
- ¹³ *Idem*, p. 45.
- ¹⁴ Régis Debray, *Transmitting Culture* (*Transmettre*, Odile Jacob, Paris 1997), Columbia University Press, New York 2000.
- ¹⁵ Nanna Verhoeff, *The Medium Is the Method: Locative Media for Digital Archives*, in Julia Eckel, Bernd Leiendecker, Daniela Olek, Christine Pieporka (eds.), *(Dis)Orientig Media and Narrative Mazes*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2013, p. 29.
- ¹⁶ *Idem*, pp. 18, 28.
- ¹⁷ Jane M. Gaines, "What Happened to the Philosophy of Film History?," in *Film History*, vol. 25, nos. 1-2, 2013, p. 71.
- ¹⁸ *Ibidem*.
- ¹⁹ Dana Polan, "La Poétique de l'histoire: *Metahistory* de Hayden White," in *Iris*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1984, p. 32.
- ²⁰ Hayden White, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1973, pp. 37-38.
- ²¹ Edward Branigan, "Color and Cinema: Problems in the Writing of History," in *Film Reader*, no. 4, 1979, p. 29.
- ²² David J. Staley, *Computers, Visualization and History*, M.E. Sharpe, London 2003, pp. 59-60.
- ²³ John Bender, Michael Marrinam, *The Culture of Diagram*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2010, p. 19.
- ²⁴ Bernhard Rieder, Theo Röhle, *Digital Methods: Five Challenges*, in David M. Berry (ed.), *Understanding Digital Humanities*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2012, pp. 69, 72.
- ²⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (*L'écriture de l'histoire*, Gallimard, Paris 1975), Columbia University Press, New York 1988, p. 64.
- ²⁶ Yuri Tsivian, *Cinematics. Part of the Humanities' Cyberinfrastructure*, cit., p. 10.
- ²⁷ See <http://www.cinematics.lv/database.php>, last visit 11 June 2014.
- ²⁸ See <http://www.cinematics.lv/cinematics.php>, last visit 10 June 2014.
- ²⁹ Yuri Tsivian, *Cinematics. Part of the Humanities' Cyberinfrastructure*, cit., p. 99.
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- ³¹ Vladimir Petric, *Constructivism in Film: The Man with the Movie Camera. A Cinematic Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1987.
- ³² Id., "From a Written Film History to a Visual History of Film," in *Cinema Journal*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1974, p. 21.
- ³³ *Idem*, p. 24.
- ³⁴ Bruno Latour, Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1986, pp. 141, 151.
- ³⁵ Dziga Vertov, *The Factory of Facts*, in Annette Michelson (ed.), *Kino-Eye. The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1984, pp. 58-60.
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Résonances de l'observateur à travers la pratique des jeux vidéo¹

*Ironie de ce dispositif : il nous fait croire qu'il y va de notre « libération ».*²

Dès les premières pages de *L'Art de l'observateur*,³ Jonathan Crary inscrit son propos au cœur des développements récents de l'imagerie informatisée en affirmant que « la vision se retrouve située dans un univers coupé de l'observateur humain ».⁴ Un peu plus loin, il insiste sur le fait que :

*Pour comprendre cette abstraction inéluctable du visuel [...] il faudrait poser et résoudre de nombreuses questions, dont certaines, parmi les plus cruciales, sont d'ordre historique. [...] De quel type de rupture s'agit-il ? En même temps, quels sont les éléments de continuité qui relient les images contemporaines aux organisations antérieures du visuel ? [...] Comment le corps, y compris le corps percevant, entre-t-il dans la composition de machines, d'économies et de dispositifs nouveaux, tour à tour sociaux, libidinaux ou technologiques ?*⁵

C'est avec ces propos de Crary en tête que nous entreprenons ce travail. Il ne s'agit seulement plus pour nous de « repenser et de reconstruire [...] l'arrière-plan historique »⁶ des questions qu'il pose, mais d'aborder de front certains aspects de la pratique contemporaine des jeux vidéo, et plus exactement les manières de voir qu'ils organisent.

Nous étudierons le dispositif des jeux vidéo depuis la notion d'observateur de Crary. Nous tenterons de dessiner les contours toujours perméables d'un observateur contemporain, lequel joue aux jeux vidéo, en regard d'un observateur du XIX^e siècle que définit Crary, et qui est le résultat d'un grand nombre de changements dans les modes de consommation des images, changements qui attribuent notamment au corps une place centrale dans l'acte de voir.

Il semble important de replacer la pratique des jeux vidéo dans une histoire plus large qui pourrait rejoindre le projet d'une histoire des pratiques liées aux écrans,⁷ dans laquelle on identifierait entre le XIX^e et XXI^e siècle de nombreuses résonances. C'est à une histoire de longue durée que nous pensons ici, histoire dans laquelle ne cessent de se croiser pratiques scientifiques et spectaculaires, histoire au sein de laquelle l'étude des structures

matérielles et des discours joue un rôle prépondérant. Cette historiographie ne repose pas sur le postulat d'un processus continu menant vers la pratique des images interactives ou des dispositifs participatifs, mais se joue au contraire dans une forme de transversalité, entre ruptures et continuités. Nos rapports aux images les plus récentes ne cessent de renvoyer à des pratiques et discours plus anciens.

En identifiant certaines pratiques et discours du XIX^e à travers celles et ceux plus récents des images dites « interactives », il s'agit de déployer « l'espace d'une dispersion », au sens où l'entend Michel Foucault.⁸ Les pratiques du XIX^e siècle auxquelles nous renverrons ici s'intègrent dans la perspective d'une démarche généalogique qui nous permet d'envisager le retour *au présent* de certaines pratiques et discours, les manières dont ils émergent et se déploient dans le temps.⁹

Au cours d'une séquence du jeu de tir à la première personne, *Call of Duty 4. Modern Warfare*, le joueur incarne un tireur d'élite accompagné d'un personnage non joueur, le capitaine MacMillan. Ce dernier connaît parfaitement les lieux et guidera le joueur tout au long de la mission. Les indications de notre camarade sont essentiellement verbales. Il nous ordonne, entre autres, de le suivre, de rester à couvert, de nous accroupir ou de ralentir. Formulant des phrases parfois plus complexes (figg. 73-74) ; il nous indique la présence d'un ennemi nous laissant le choix de l'abattre ou non, nous ordonne d'être patients ou nous donne des informations sur les lieux. Ce personnage aura toujours devancé le joueur, il lui aura ouvert la voie et lui aura permis d'atteindre l'objectif.

À plusieurs reprises, et par le biais du personnage du capitaine, on aura dit au joueur quoi faire, à quel moment, où regarder, quand tirer ; on lui aura décrit ce qu'il ne pouvait voir au risque d'être repéré, on aura dirigé son attention vers des points précis, et on lui aura ordonné, militairement, de s'immobiliser ou de se mettre en mouvement, au risque du *game over*. Ce camarade artificiellement intelligent aura pris pour le joueur la place d'un bonimenteur un peu particulier, organisant la compréhension de la situation de jeu et guidant le joueur vers la victoire. Cette séquence permet d'entrevoir la manière avec laquelle certains jeux vidéo orientent le point de vue libre de l'utilisateur au sein d'un espace navigable. Cet exemple met en lumière la manière dont le joueur est dans le même temps contrôleur et contrôlé, elle met en lumière la manière dont une situation de jeu est le lieu d'une discipline, car si le joueur ne respecte pas ce qui lui est plus ou moins poliment ordonné, il perd la partie. Cette situation contredit la liberté toute relative des déplacements du joueur dans une architecture a priori sans limites, ou présentée comme telle. Les déplacements du joueur font l'objet d'un contrôle, ils sont anticipés et rigoureusement cadrés. Il convient de pointer ici l'articulation entre la vue libre proposée par certains programmes et le souci, dans le même temps, de diriger le regard, de faire en sorte que ce qui doit être vu le soit.

Dans un article intitulé « The Game Player's Duty » – renvoyant sans doute au titre du jeu *Call of Duty*, – Claus Pias insiste sur le *devoir* du joueur, son adéquation à un ensemble de règles ; règles qui ordonnent au joueur d'être à la bonne place, c'est-à-dire celle définie dans le programme. Dans le cas contraire, le *game over*, la suspension du jeu, pénalise sa mauvaise conduite, son incapacité à se conformer aux attentes de la programmation. Nous citons l'auteur à deux reprises :

At the interface, not only do players take control over a game, but a game also takes control over its players.¹⁰ [...] Any breach of duty is punished with a symbolic death, the end of the game. A game is thus not only a set of instructions, a kind of law code for the world of the particular game, that I have the duty to follow when I am in the company of computers, but at the same time also a police agent that precisely monitors my actions.¹¹

La citation de Pias mérite d'être placée en regard du message d'avertissement qui intervient au lancement du jeu *Silent Hill : Shattered Memories* (fig. 75):

*This video game psychologically profiles you as you play. It gets to know who you really are then uses this information to change itself. It uses its knowledge against you, creating your own personal nightmare. This game plays you as much as you play it.*¹²

La discipline du joueur dans le cadre de la situation de jeu¹³ redouble une autre forme de discipline, celle du corps et de son adéquation à la machine, pour laquelle nous pouvons revenir vers la pratique des jouets optiques. Wanda Strauven a justement souligné l'implication du corps dans la pratique des jouets optiques, affirmant que ce que l'œil voit est fonction de ce que la main met en mouvement. Ou, reprenant les termes de Strauven : « how the eye is depending on the hand ».¹⁴ Ce que le travail de Strauven suggère, c'est que l'acte de voir est ici indétachable d'un mouvement de la main. Les jouets optiques que sont par exemple le thaumatrope, le phénakistiscope, le praxinoscope, ou encore la toupie fantoches de Reynaud, chacun à différents degrés, ont besoin d'être actionnés par l'utilisateur pour que l'illusion de mouvement ait lieu. Cette illusion est le résultat d'une construction, le résultat d'une abstraction scientifique que les recherches sur la vision au XIX^e siècle ont établi. Strauven précise en ce sens que l'œil trompe le cerveau via la main.

Ces propos s'appuient sur le travail de Crary qui souligne que les jouets optiques sont dans un premier temps des jouets scientifiques, des expérimentations sur la vision symptomatiques d'une manière dont on s'en représente le processus au XIX^e. Crary écrit à propos du phénakistiscope que « cette forme qui permet à un nouveau public de consommer des images d'une 'réalité' illusoire est liée par une relation d'isomorphisme à des appareils utilisés pour accroître le savoir sur l'observateur ».¹⁵

Selon la racine latine du terme, *observare* ne signifie pas seulement voir, mais « se conformer à, respecter ». L'observateur est pour Crary « une personne qui voit dans le cadre d'un ensemble prédéterminé de possibilités, une personne qui s'inscrit dans un système de conventions et de limitations [...] ».¹⁶

Les réflexions sur l'observateur étudient la manière dont l'acte de voir, à une époque donnée, est déterminée par les pratiques scientifiques, spectaculaires et économiques. Autrement dit l'observateur est un paradigme historique et non la figure d'un sujet qui pourrait se substituer et être synonyme, par exemple, d'opérateur, de spectateur, de flâneur, ou encore de joueur, bien que chacun de ces termes ait son importance dans la construction théorique et historique d'un observateur.

Les déterminations de l'observateur ne sont jamais simplement d'ordre technique ou esthétique mais également scientifique, philosophique, économique et culturel. Dans le cas de la pratique des jouets optiques, la discipline du corps se conformant à un mode d'utilisation bien précis trahit une autre forme de rigueur, celle scientifique, qui agença ces mêmes jouets qu'on appelait d'abord jouets scientifiques ou philosophiques. Ces jouets en disaient alors autant sur la production possible d'un mouvement à partir d'images fixes, que sur son utilisateur et ses facultés à être le lieu de l'illusion. Les jouets optiques sont donc une étape parmi d'autres par laquelle passe les recherches sur la vision au XIX^e siècle. Le développement de ces jouets et leur commercialisation organisent une manière de voir et de consommer des images accompagnée d'un mode d'emploi, c'est-à-dire un ensemble de règles de conduite pour utiliser le dispositif et voir, *correctement*, le mouvement des images. Leur pratique se joue entre mobilité et immobilité : à la mobilité de l'image se joint le corps cerné de l'observateur, son adaptation à la machine.¹⁷

En somme, la définition d'un observateur, ici de l'utilisateur des jouets optiques et là du joueur de jeux vidéo, ne saurait se réduire à ce qu'il voit mais doit tenir compte de la manière dont il voit, des règles pour voir, et du milieu dans lequel il voit. L'article de Strauven reprend à son compte l'implication du corps, ici la main, dans l'acte de voir, vision d'abord dominée, comme le dit Crary « par la nécessité de connaître les facultés de l'œil et de le plier à des lois rigoureuses ».¹⁸

Le rôle de la main dans l'acte de voir dit bien la discipline du corps dans nombre de dispositifs de vision pour

voir mieux, voir autrement, voir ou mettre l'image en mouvement, ou encore par le mouvement du corps intervenir sur le mouvement même des images. Si nous insistons sur le travail de Strauven et sur celui de Crary, c'est parce que la définition de l'observateur nous semble un élément important pour l'étude des images des jeux vidéo. Au niveau le plus basique, on sait que tout jeu vidéo, dans sa pratique, requiert l'intervention physique d'un joueur aux commandes. À ce niveau, le dispositif implique une articulation manifeste entre le regard et la main, parfois les deux mains, sinon le corps tout entier. Si en effet, comme avec les jouets optiques, ce que l'œil voit, ou une partie de ce que l'œil voit, dépend de la main et du corps en général, il faut émettre ici l'hypothèse qu'au cœur des jeux vidéo il y a plutôt une interdépendance de l'œil et du corps, à savoir que les mouvements de la main sont aussi fonction de ce que l'œil voit. La situation de jeu et son accomplissement, éventuellement, reposent sur la faculté de répondre habilement à ce qui est vu. Le succès du joueur repose sur son habileté, sur sa faculté à ajuster et perfectionner le rapport entre l'œil et le corps.¹⁹ Si le phénakistiscope, ou plus tard le mutoscope, rendent possible la variation de la vitesse de rotation du disque ou de défilement des images selon la vitesse du mouvement de la main posée sur la manivelle, on peut penser que dans le jeu vidéo la main participe et réagit à un mouvement qu'elle ne produit pas dans son ensemble. Ainsi le joueur ne contrôlera qu'une partie d'un mouvement plus général, il n'est que le rouage d'une machine plus importante : le joueur est à sa place dans la programmation du jeu vidéo, il est à la place qui lui est assignée et sa marge de manœuvre est inscrite à même le programme.

Ce qui nous amène à penser que le dispositif du jeu vidéo est à envisager d'une part au niveau de ses interfaces matérielles, et d'autre part au niveau du programme lui-même, soit de ses interfaces logiciels, et notamment de ce qui se passe dans l'image : le programme redouble ainsi la discipline initiale du corps ajusté à la machine. L'agencement interface-homme-machine trahit donc un autre agencement, celui de la programmation et son ensemble de règles implicites et explicites. Règles implicites qui au niveau de la base de données régissent le fonctionnement de l'univers du jeu, et règles explicites qui adressent au joueur ce qu'il doit et peut faire.²⁰ Si l'on peut assez vite formuler l'identité des dispositifs entre eux à travers l'ajustement du corps à la machine via l'image, nous risquons bien souvent de passer à côté des différences entre les jeux, et qui se situent au niveau de chaque programme. Ces programmes organisent chaque fois un rapport à l'image, une posture du joueur que modèlent à des degrés différents des stratégies de captation de l'attention, pour évoquer à nouveau l'exemple du joueur dont le regard et les déplacements sont guidés par le capitaine Mc Millan.

Orientation du regard et des déplacements qui étaient déjà, dans une certaine mesure, celle du spectateur des panoramas, lequel avait parfois en main une reproduction papier du sujet peint avec la numérotation des éléments importants de la toile. Et également, comme le signale Alison Griffiths,²¹ il arrivait qu'un conférencier anime le panorama de ses commentaires et guide le regard des spectateurs vers des détails de la représentation. On sait quelle discipline du corps et du regard le panorama développait à travers son architecture, par exemple en limitant la plate-forme centrale de barrières et en empêchant au spectateur d'identifier la source lumineuse. Si nous pouvons dire avec les jouets optiques que les yeux ont des mains, il semble important de rappeler que dans le cas du panorama, pour reprendre les termes de Michel Frizot, « les yeux ont aussi des pieds ». ²² C'est donc à la faveur de ses pieds que le spectateur peut apprécier et embrasser du regard, morceau par morceau, une toile circulaire parfois complétée par un faux terrain en avant-plan ; dispositif que Robert Barker a d'abord intitulé « La nature à coup d'œil ». ²³ Ces remarques sur l'implication du corps du spectateur dans l'acte de voir semblent à même de rejoindre les propos de Anne Friedberg sur la figure du flâneur. ²⁴ Bien que l'auteur ne s'attarde pas sur les pieds du flâneur, ²⁵ les questions de la déambulation, du parcours, du *shopping*, de tout un ensemble de pratiques contemporaines que Friedberg étudie au regard de la culture visuelle de XIX^e siècle, ne cessent de nous y ramener.

Crary insiste sur les limites du corps du spectateur au centre de l'architecture circulaire du panorama :

*The authority of the panorama was founded on the limitations of subjective vision, on the inadequacy of a human observer. It posed a view of a motif, whether a landscape or city, that seemed immediately accessible but that always exceeded the capacity of a spectator to grasp it. [...] the panorama image is consumable only as fragments, as parts that must be cognitively reassembled into an imagined whole.*²⁶

À l'instar du panorama, certains jeux vidéo placent le joueur face à une image débordante, une image qui implique un mouvement du regard pour ne la saisir toujours qu'en partie, par fragment. La logique de ce type d'images repose sur l'incapacité du spectateur à tout voir et sur la nécessité de se déplacer pour voir. Pour reprendre les termes de Paul Sztulman, « les jeux vidéos coordonnent la possibilité de voir avec celle d'aller ».²⁷ De cette organisation du voir naît l'idée selon laquelle le joueur partagerait les pieds du spectateur de panorama, contraint au déplacement ; situation dans laquelle le mouvement du regard est dans le même temps un mouvement du corps.

Dans le prolongement des réflexions de Thomas Elsaesser et Wanda Strauven,²⁸ on peut envisager ici le jeu vidéo comme symptomatique d'un possible retour du « plouc ». Il faut en effet être un peu plouc, être un peu *Uncle Josh* ou *Sherlock Jr.*, pour ne plus voir l'écran comme limite ou rupture et envisager l'image comme un espace navigable. Il faut *accepter* de s'y déplacer, de s'y projeter, d'agir comme si nous y étions, comme si nous étions ce que nous manipulons. Le joueur est alors peut-être un plouc qui accepte de voir avec ses mains et ses pieds quand bien même il est installé, bien souvent assis, face à son écran. Faisant ici l'économie discutable des apports des *game studies*, la figure faussement provocante du plouc permet d'envisager la situation paradoxale dans laquelle se trouve le joueur. D'après Elsa Boyer « il n'y a pas d'un côté l'immobilité du corps et la mobilité dans les images, mais des états et des tensions du corps ».²⁹ Et l'auteure d'affirmer ensuite que le joueur s'inscrit dans « des images qui construisent et fantasment la perception ».³⁰ Comme un ancrage esthétique à ce fantasme d'incorporation, nous pouvons voir à l'occasion surgir par les bords du cadre une ou plusieurs parties du corps simulé de notre avatar, comme dans cette capture d'écran du jeu *Mirror's Edge* (fig. 76).

L'étude du jeu vidéo, à travers ses interfaces matérielles et les modalités de navigation des espaces virtuels qu'il configure, nous permet d'identifier d'une part la place du jeu vidéo au sein d'une archéologie des dispositifs de vision et d'audition, et d'autre part de retrouver, par-delà des questions d'ordre esthétique et technique, la dimension épistémique du dispositif et son rapport plus général à la culture visuelle de son époque.

Nous rejoignons sur ce point le travail de François Albéra et Maria Tortajada, dans leur article « Le Dispositif n'existe pas ! ».³¹ À travers le concept de « dispositif-épistémè »³² ils identifient l'articulation foucauldienne entre le dispositif et les énoncés (formations discursives qui relèvent aussi bien du dit que du non-dit), soit la manière dont un dispositif – par exemple le panoptique – supporte et est dans le même temps supporté par un ensemble discursif, par des formes de savoir.³³ Le « dispositif-épistémè » cristallise le rapport qu'il y a entre le dispositif et le discursif, il organise la possibilité, sinon la nécessité, de retrouver à travers le dispositif le discours, et inversement, à travers le discours les aspects concrets du dispositif. Il nous semble que dans cette articulation on accorde aux discours la matérialité du dispositif³⁴ et au dispositif la discursivité des énoncés. Comme le suggèrent Albéra et Tortajada, le « dispositif-épistémè » permet de penser le rapport dans l'œuvre de Foucault entre *L'archéologie du savoir* et *Surveiller et punir*.³⁵

Le dispositif-épistémè nous permet de comprendre comment les structures interactives des jeux vidéo n'engagent pas seulement un rapport au visible mais à travers lui tout un ensemble d'énoncés qui passent aussi bien par la fabrique de comportements que par les discours publicitaires des industries culturelles. Le dispositif-épistémè nous invite à ne plus penser séparés dispositifs et discours. C'est dans cette perspective que nous envisageons les espaces navigables des jeux vidéo.

L'objet jeu vidéo n'est pas réductible à un ensemble d'opérations esthétiques et techniques, ou comme le dit

Crary à propos des études sur les « nouvelles images » : « S'intéresser aux propriétés esthétiques de l'image digitale [...] revient à négliger le fait que cette imagerie est subordonnée à un vaste champ d'opérations et de réquisits non visuels ».³⁶

C'est aussi à travers le champ élargi des opérations non visuelles qui organisent l'image que l'étude du jeu vidéo doit être envisagée. Les modalités de navigation dans l'espace virtuel, passant par des schémas plus ou moins complexes de réseaux interactifs, véhiculent avec elles un ensemble de discours basé entre autres sur la navigation supposée libre du joueur dans un « monde ouvert », ou encore sur la personnalisation de l'expérience à travers différents choix qui influenceront sur le récit et les caractéristiques de l'avatar, modelant son aptitude à résoudre les problèmes qui lui seront posés.³⁷

Avec ses trente-trois fins différentes annoncées, le jeu *Heavy Rain* repose sur un système d'interactivité par embranchement (*menu-based interactivity*)³⁸ qui place le joueur dans des situations de jeu à choix multiples. Chaque décision a une implication plus ou moins différente sur le déroulement de l'histoire (fig. 77).

David Cage dit du jeu qu'il a dirigé, qu'il s'agit d' « un jeu dans lequel les actions du joueur ont des conséquences sur l'histoire, [...] nous avons essayé de faire en sorte que le joueur soit non seulement l'acteur mais aussi le réalisateur et le scénariste de sa propre expérience ».³⁹ Le concepteur du jeu fait bien évidemment référence ici au comportement du joueur conditionné par la structure du jeu et le nombre de possibles mis en œuvre. Les propos de Cage nous permettent de restituer le jeu au sein d'une tendance plus large que ne domine pas uniquement l'interactivité permise par le médium vidéoludique.

Le discours développé ici sur la liberté du joueur et sa participation active à l'histoire, s'inscrit dans une tendance générale où les jeux vidéo organisent des formes de personnalisation supportées de la même manière par un discours sur le joueur comme « acteur, réalisateur ou scénariste de sa propre expérience ». La question qui doit être posée est celle de la résonance à travers ces jeux de tout un ensemble de stratégies qui appartiennent au marketing et que l'on nomme selon les cas, personnalisation de masse (*mass customisation*) permettant à tout un chacun, selon les propos des industries, de s'approprier et personnaliser même les plus petits des objets manufacturés. On parle également de ciblage comportemental, ou de reciblage publicitaire (*behavioral retargeting*) dans les cas où la publicité est établie selon le profil du consommateur dont elle a déjà en sa possession certaines informations.⁴⁰ Les jeux vidéo participent d'un contexte économique plus large et de manières dites « interactives » de parcourir et consommer des images et du contenu. Ces stratégies redoublent celles de captation de l'attention vues précédemment avec l'exemple du capitaine MacMillan, et rejoignent le propos général de Crary dans son livre *Suspensions of perception* : « attention is the means by which an individual observer can [...] make perception its own, and attention is at the same time a means by which a perceiver becomes open to control and annexation by external agencies ».⁴¹ Dans le prolongement de ses réflexions sur l'attention, Crary propose dans *24/7* un élément de réponse possible aux multiples questions qu'il pose en ouverture de *L'art de l'observateur*, et parmi lesquelles l'hypothèse d'une rupture – qui ne va jamais sans certaines formes de continuité par ailleurs – entre le modèle d'un observateur du XIX^e siècle et celui, contemporain, de l'imagerie informatisée :

*La plupart des sens que le terme « observateur » avait pu historiquement revêtir se trouvent déstabilisés dans de telles conditions – à savoir lorsque les actes individuels de vision sont sollicités à l'infini pour être convertis en une information qui va à la fois servir à renforcer des technologies de contrôle et être une forme de plus-value sur un marché fondé sur l'accumulation des données au sujet du comportement de l'utilisateur. Avec le déploiement croissant de moyens techniques destinés à faire de chaque acte de voir, en lui-même, un objet d'observation, on assiste à un renversement encore plus littéral des thèses classiques sur la position et les capacités d'actions de l'observateur.*⁴²

Nous ne faisons qu'ébaucher certains aspects d'un travail plus important sur la compréhension du déploiement et des correspondances entre dispositifs et discours passés et présents. En reprenant l'énoncé de Tom Gunning et André Gaudreault, à savoir que *le cinéma des premiers temps constitue un défi à l'histoire du cinéma*, nous pouvons penser d'une manière similaire que les expériences optiques du XIX^e siècle sont un défi lancé à une archéologie/généalogie des nouveaux médias, au regard notamment de leurs aspects interactifs les plus actuels. C'est en ce sens que le corpus des dispositifs optiques que l'on situe dans le cadre d'une préhistoire du cinéma mériterait d'être étudié, non plus seulement en regard de la reproduction fidèle du mouvement à venir, mais également selon les manières dont ces objets conditionnent et organisent l'acte de voir en véhiculant divers discours sur le corps et la place du spectateur. Pour réaliser ce projet, les travaux sur l'épistémologie des dispositifs de Albéra et Tortajada nous semblent être un outil important pour rendre compte des réseaux discursifs qui parcourent et forment les dispositifs à travers l'histoire. Dans cette perspective, l'étude du jeu vidéo n'est pas l'étude de ses structures ludiques ni l'étude de ce qui fonde ses spécificités, mais plutôt celle de ses fantasmes – incorporation, immersion, interactivité, par exemple – dont la généalogie et l'archéologie restent à construire.⁴³ Il nous faut repartir de la culture visuelle et marchande qui se déploie au XIX^e afin de saisir les articulations entre les dispositifs et les corps des spectateurs. Articulations qui acquièrent des résonances étonnantes tandis que les dispositifs les plus récents arborent, parfois comme autant de nouveautés, les notions d'immersion et d'interactivité, et avec elles tout un discours sur la liberté, celle du joueur ou de l'utilisateur – celle du consommateur assurément.

Illustrations

73. *Call of duty 4. Modern Warfare* (Infinity Ward, 2007).

74. *Call of duty 4. Modern Warfare* (Infinity Ward, 2007).

75. *Silent Hill. Shattered Memories* (Climax, 2010).

76. *Mirror's Edge* (Dice, 2009).

77. *Heavy Rain* (Quantic Dream, 2009).

Notes

¹ Je tiens à remercier Édouard Arnoldy ainsi que Laurent Guido pour leurs remarques lors de la préparation de mon intervention orale au colloque, et Arnaud Widendaele pour ses lectures et discussions du présent travail.

² Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité, tome 1. La volonté de savoir*, Gallimard, Paris 1976, p. 211.

³ Jonathan Crary, *L'Art de l'observateur. Vision et modernité au XIX^e siècle* (*Techniques of the observer*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 1990), Jacqueline Chambon, Nîmes 1994.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 20.

⁵ *Idem*, p. 21.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ Charles Musser, *Towards a History of Screen Practice*, dans *The Emergence of Cinema. The American Screen to 1907*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1993, pp. 15-54.

- ⁸ Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir*, Gallimard, Paris 1969, p. 20 ; sur la question de la dispersion dans l'archéologie foucauldienne, cf. Édouard Arnoldy, « De la dispersion en histoire du cinéma », dans *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 23, n° 1, 2012, pp. 73-92.
- ⁹ Sur la généalogie comme « émergence » et « déploiement », cf. Michel Foucault, « Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire », dans Id., *Dits et écrits I*, Gallimard, Paris 2001, pp. 1004-1024.
- ¹⁰ Claus Pias, *The Game Player's Duty. The User as the Gestalt of the Ports*, dans Erkki Huhtamo, Jussi Parikka (sous la direction de), *Media Archaeology. Approaches, Applications, Implications*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2011, p. 166.
- ¹¹ *Idem*, p. 179.
- ¹² Dans ce jeu, les réponses du joueur à des questionnaires lors de séances thérapeutiques constituent autant d'informations qui détermineront la manière dont le jeu s'adaptera au profil psychologique du joueur. Remarquons au passage que la dimension interactive est placée ici sous le signe du danger avec l'inscription en gros et gras « PSYCHOLOGY WARNING ». La version française, plus tempérée, affiche en tête de message « AVERTISSEMENT ».
- ¹³ Nous ne mentionnons pas ici le fait que cette discipline s'opère très souvent, en début de partie, par l'épreuve d'un didacticiel dans lequel le joueur est confronté à l'apprentissage des mécanismes visuelles et opérationnels du jeu.
- ¹⁴ Wanda Strauven, *The Observer's Dilemma. To Touch or Not to Touch*, dans Erkki Huhtamo, Jussi Parikka (sous la direction de), *Media Archaeology. Approaches, Applications, Implications*, cit., p. 154.
- ¹⁵ Jonathan Crary, *L'Art de l'observateur*, cit., p. 161.
- ¹⁶ *Idem*, p. 26.
- ¹⁷ Nous rejoignons toutefois la critique formulée par Maria Tortajada à l'égard du travail de Crary. Il faudrait tenir compte des différences entre les dispositifs convoqués par Crary, notamment par une description détaillée des machines et de la place de spectateur ou d'utilisateur qu'elles déterminent. À l'inverse, Crary associe par exemple, en vertu de leur mécanisme, diorama et phénakistiscope, cf. Maria Tortajada « Archéologie du cinéma. De l'histoire à l'épistémologie », dans *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 14, n° 2-3, 2004, pp. 19-51. Sur ce point nous pouvons mentionner la diversité des mécanismes intégrés aux jouets optiques pour donner le mouvement, depuis l'élan donné par la main, en passant par la manivelle et jusqu'au système à ressort, cf. Laurent Mannoni, *Le Mouvement continué. Catalogue illustré de la collection des appareils de la Cinémathèque française*, Cinémathèque française/Gabriele Mazzotta, Paris-Milan 1996, pp. 216-290 ; voir aussi, Benoit Turquety, *Formes de machines, formes de mouvement*, dans François Albéra, Maria Tortajada (sous la direction de), *Cinédispositifs, spectacles, cinéma, télévision, littérature, L'Âge d'homme*, Lausanne 2011, pp. 260-279.
- ¹⁸ *Idem*, p. 162.
- ¹⁹ Le succès du joueur repose sur l'optimisation de ce rapport.
- ²⁰ L'esprit synthétique de ce travail nous empêche de complexifier davantage une approche ici bien trop schématique de la question des règles du jeu. Mentionnons toutefois un ouvrage qui tente de faire le tour de la question en envisageant les rapports complexes entre les univers simulés des jeux et les régularités qui les animent, Jesper Juul, *Half-Real. Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 2005.
- ²¹ Alison Griffiths, *Shivers Down Your Spine. Cinema, Museums & the Immersive View*, Columbia University Press, New York 2008, pp. 45-46.
- ²² Michel Frizot, « Revoir le panorama. Ou les yeux ont aussi des pieds », dans *Cinémathèque*, n° 6, automne 1994, pp. 78-95.

²³ Le coup d'œil étant notamment, comme l'a analysé Charlotte Bigg, une opération de reconnaissance militaire qui définit l'acte de voir de l'éclaireur et son habileté à identifier et mémoriser, en un *coup d'œil*, la position de l'ennemi et la configuration du lieu, son relief et ses points stratégiques. Cf. Charlotte Bigg, *The Panorama, or La Nature à Coup d'œil*, dans Erna Fiorentini (sous la direction de), *Observing Nature – Representing Experience. The Osmotic Dynamics of Romanticism 1800-1850*, Reimer Verlag, pp. 73-95 ; nous pouvons de ce fait nous figurer la portée du coup d'œil dans les jeux vidéo de type *Call of duty*.

²⁴ Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping. Cinema and the Postmodern*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1993.

²⁵ À l'exception d'une illustration légendée *The Feet of the Flâneur*, *Idem*, p. 109.

²⁶ Jonathan Crary, « Géricault, the Panorama, and Sites of Reality in the Early Nineteenth Century », dans *Grey Room*, n° 9, automne 2002, p. 21.

²⁷ Paul Sztulman, *Les Explorateurs des abîmes*, dans Elsa Boyer (sous la direction de), *Voir les jeux vidéos. Perception, construction, fiction*, Bayard, Montrouge 2012, p. 48.

²⁸ Thomas Elsaesser, *Discipline through Diegesis : The Rube Film between "Attractions" and "Narrative Integration"*, dans Wanda Strauven (sous la direction de), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2006 ; Wanda Strauven, « Early Cinema's Touch(able) Screens: From Uncle Josh to Ali Barbouyou », dans *NECSUS. European Journal of Media Studies*, autumn 2012, <http://www.necsus-ejms.org/early-cinemas-touchablescreens-from-uncle-josh-to-ali-barbouyou/>.

²⁹ Elsa Boyer, *Introduction*, dans Elsa Boyer (sous la direction de), *Voir les jeux vidéo*, cit., p. 11.

³⁰ *Idem*, p. 12.

³¹ François Albéra, Maria Tortajada, « Le Dispositif n'existe pas ! », dans *Id.* (sous la direction de), *Cinédispositifs*, cit., pp. 13-38.

³² *Idem*, p. 31.

³³ Chez Foucault, dans *Surveiller et Punir*, le dispositif panoptique rend visible le jeu entre formes de savoir et formes de pouvoir.

³⁴ Matérialité du discours représentative de l'*Archéologie du savoir*, puisque Foucault écrit à propos de l'archéologie : « Elle ne traite pas le discours comme *document*, comme signe d'autre chose, comme élément qui devrait être transparent mais dont il faut souvent traverser l'opacité importune pour rejoindre enfin, là où elle est tenue en réserve, la profondeur de l'essentiel ; elle s'adresse au discours dans son volume propre, à titre de *monument*. Ce n'est pas une discipline interprétative : elle ne cherche pas un 'autre discours' mieux caché ». Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir*, cit., p. 188.

³⁵ Il est à ce titre surprenant que jamais, à ma connaissance, *L'archéologie du savoir* ne soit citée par Jonathan Crary, au contraire de *Surveiller et punir*, quand bien même l'étude que Crary propose des discours et dispositifs d'une époque laisserait entendre une telle référence. Crary affirme pourtant dès la note 5 de *L'art de l'observateur* que « la visée de cette étude est 'généalogique' au sens où l'entend Foucault », cf. Jonathan Crary, *L'Art de l'observateur*, cit., p. 6. Mais qu'en est-il de l'articulation entre archéologie et généalogie sur laquelle Foucault lui-même est revenu, notamment dès les premières pages du second tome de son *Histoire de la sexualité* ?

³⁶ Jonathan Crary, *24/7. Le capitalisme à l'assaut du sommeil*, trad. Grégoire Chamayou, La découverte, Paris 2014, p. 58.

³⁷ Il conviendrait de faire intervenir ici les travaux de Gilbert Simondon sur l'objet technique, notamment lorsque ce dernier envisage à travers ce qu'il nomme « machine ouverte » des « degrés d'indé-

termination » ou « marges d'indétermination ». Les jeux vidéo semblent reposer sur des agencements variables de ces marges et l'on retrouve à travers eux autant de discours sur les fonctions libératrices des jeux ; cf. Gilbert Simondon, *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* (1958), Aubier, Paris 2012, pp. 195-197.

³⁸ Selon la terminologie de Lev Manovich, dans *Le Langage des nouveaux médias*, trad. Richard Crevier, Les Presses du Réel, Dijon 2010, p. 114.

³⁹ « Entretien avec David Cage », dans *Amusement*, n° 7, janvier 2010, p. 86.

⁴⁰ Dans le cadre d'une étude sur la culture visuelle, il est important d'identifier comment l'économie et la culture s'intègrent aux espaces des jeux vidéo. Sur cette question relative à la culture visuelle, cf. Susan Buck-Morss, *Voir le capital. Théorie critique et culture visuelle*, Les presses ordinaires, Paris 2010.

⁴¹ Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception. Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 2000, p. 5.

⁴² Id., 24/7. *Le capitalisme à l'assaut du sommeil*, cit., p. 59.

⁴³ Dans un article, Jason Wilson affirme l'incapacité des *game studies*, plus précisément de la *ludology*, à penser l'historicité de son objet en dehors d'une approche anthropologique qui semble faire fi de l'histoire, cf. Jason Wilson « Participation TV : Early Games, Video Art, Abstraction and the Problem of Attention », dans *Convergence*, n° 10, 2004, pp. 83-100, <http://con.sagepub.com/content/10/3/83>. Un reproche similaire est formulé par Claus Pias dans l'article cité plus haut, en effet, les modèles convoqués qui sont généralement Huizinga et Caillois ne disent par exemple rien des dispositifs concrets desquels procèdent pourtant toute situation de jeu.

Theory/History



Annual Report

1900-1901

1901-1902

1902-1903

1903-1904

1904-1905

1905-1906

1906-1907

1907-1908

1908-1909

1909-1910

1910-1911

1911-1912

1912-1913

1913-1914

1914-1915

1915-1916

1916-1917

1917-1918

1918-1919

Why We Took the "Historical Turn:" The Poisons and Antidotes Version

As we know, Michel Foucault, the "anti-historicist" who rejected traditional history while working as a historian, left no specific instructions as to how to transform his ideas into methodologies.¹ It does not help that Foucault's thought is now claimed by a perplexing variation of approaches using the term *media archaeology*, among them the "New Film History."² Today we are often left wondering where to take Foucault's provocative thought, assured only that it will lead us away from traditional historiography. So if, following Foucault, we reject origins and search-for-truth narratives and puzzle over the historical knowledges organizing our research, why not take even more license with his provocation? Why not scour Foucault for other means of thinking historical relations anew? This is the spirit in which I return to his evocative mixture of structural metaphors: "History has a more important task than to be a handmaiden to philosophy, to recount the necessary birth of truth and values; it should become a differential knowledge of energies and failings, heights and degenerations, poisons and antidotes."³ Since in the following I open up once more the problem of what is meant by "history," let us allow Foucault to interject some intrigue into the proceedings.

What if I were to borrow the poison-antidote structure and introduce it into unlikely places? Places like the question of intellectual developments in film and media studies. And further to test our empirical proclivities lest they go unchecked, what if I were to add a historical case of poisoning? Luckily, Foucault can be invoked to explain why an essay titled *Why We Took the "Historical Turn"* will not attempt to make order out of disparate events relative to the moment it promises to explain. For now I can wriggle out of offering an explanation by saying that my topic is not so much "why we took" the "historical turn" as it is where to put the "historical turn" past relative to the present. Further, it is how, knowing what we knew in 1978 about the drawbacks of a certain kind of historicism, we could still "take the historical turn," this being my poisons and antidotes version of things, as you will see. Finally, I will show how a perhaps more skeptical group of scholars think the problem of how to *know* past events.

First, who are these skeptics? One wouldn't want to refer to their position as a "field" since the epistemologi-

cal irreverence that characterizes their stance crosses fields. So the new philosophy of history to which I refer is not a field although some thinkers constitute a breakaway subfield of the discipline of history in relation to which they are a "thorn in the flesh."⁴ Why such a thorn? To start with, the new philosophy of history is where one finds the deepest pockets of disaffection *from* if not at times outright hostility *to* history, the traditional discipline. We can expect to find there the strongest attacks on "history," the term, as well "history" as a method with a worldview that assumes the scientific knowability of things. This would be "history" as we find it in phrases like "History will show," but also projects like "the history of." Other positions we can attribute to the skeptical stance are first that "history" is not the science it purports to be and second that the majority of academic work that calls itself "history" remains indebted to the Enlightenment, that is, to the historian's "empirical-analytical" methodology underwritten by the conviction that knowledge can be acquired through empirical investigation and analytical inference.⁵ Recall here that this is the legacy Jacques Derrida rejected, his critique now the rationale for bringing him under the contemporary philosophy of history umbrella.⁶

Also claimed as honorary, although somewhat less obviously, is the early Gilles Deleuze, as we will see, as well as the more obvious French exemplars Paul Ricoeur, Roland Barthes and Jacques Rancière.⁷ Walter Benjamin is also as obvious, which reminds us of the debt that the skeptical position owes the Frankfurt School as it continued to critique 19th century German historicism.⁸ Since some of these retrospectively nominated or self-identified figures will be only a shadowy presence in the following, let me clarify that not all of them would have said in their lifetime that they did either philosophy of history or "metahistory," the term long associated with Hayden White, but that one follower thinks now needs revision into "meta-metahistory."⁹ No one term fits all of these thinkers and of course all are not equally skeptical, but if there is a term that does unite them it might be the "theories of history" their work proposes.¹⁰

None of this thinking, however, is exactly new to scholars of film and media studies. Indeed, reading the most recent work by the history skeptics is a *déjà vu* experience. Foundational there is Richard Rorty's "correspondence theory of truth," critique of the idea that written history can ever "correspond" with events of the past¹¹ and Frank Ankersmit's "anti-representationalist" challenge to the denial of the literariness of historical narrative writing.¹² Add to these positions Hayden White's point that historical writing is full of literary tropes which are only metaphorical or metonymic and nothing more, and we have quite familiar arguments.¹³ But an attempt to explain this sense of "having-been-here-before" will inevitably return us to an aspect of 1970s film theory summarized in the now nearly forgotten term *anti-historicism*.

So what is our relation *today* to these familiar theoretical positions? Do they trouble film history after the "historical turn"? We might ask whether the "New Film History" encourages or discourages a narrative in which the "cinema of attractions" predates the story film "corresponds" to the reality of spectators' experience of motion picture films exhibited before 1906-1907.¹⁴ Or following Hayden White, we could ask if to use the term "cinema of attractions" in our writing is to use a literary trope.¹⁵ In a larger sense, we wonder if Whites's critical position would make any difference at all to the commitment to "history" after or during the so-called "turn." This question, to begin with, however, can't avoid the fundamental issue of what is meant by "history," and on this topic White remains firmly agnostic. Irreverent as usual and sounding a little "fed up" after having so often made the point that the going notion of "history," the term, will not hold, he recently gave vent to his frustration but hid it in a long footnote. First, White goes back to the several senses one finds of the term "history" in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*.¹⁶ His return to Heidegger is fortuitous for us because the German philosopher is a shared source of the post-structuralist anti-historicism that has underwritten both the new philosophy of history and 1970s film theory, and White's recourse to that 1927 text reminds us of this. In a statement that is half parody, half diatribe in which he is half serious, half not, White proposes the following: to use "*historial* to mean 'history-like,' *historiology* to mean the real, para, pseudo, or pretended 'science of history,'

historiosophy to mean 'the kind of wisdom one is supposed to derive from the study of history,' *historiography* to mean 'the writing about history,' and so on, possibly even *historiogony* or *historionomy*, etc." Then he stands back, exasperated, and goes on: "It is a useless gesture, and I have no hope that it will be taken up in Anglophone discourse, first, because it is too jargonistic, and second," and here is what I would emphasize, "because it might contribute to the clarification of the term *history* and its various derivatives, the vagueness of which is crucial to the maintenance of the myth that the term *history* designates something real."¹⁷ To elaborate, White's "vagueness" reminds us of one of the ambiguities of the term "history," a doubleness contributing to confusion when "history" is also taken to mean "the past." Following the new philosophy of history critique, the idea that there is "something real" to which "history" refers assumes that "history" is synonymous with "the past," and thus a common conflation supports the mythology.¹⁸ So who conflates "history" with "the past?" Of course we all do in everyday discourse, but what professional historian would confuse the two? Who would do this? The new philosophy of history skeptics appear to know, however one sometimes gets the impression from reading them that they are tilting at windmills. Again and again they take aim at the institutionally protected historical tradition, and to what ends? Who are the traditionalists who they attack but so seldom cite? Let's put the question of "whoever they are" together with "whatever it is" that they may be thought to do and see what Hayden White thinks these hypothetical historians actually do. "Historians," he says in answer to our question, "work with the remains (ruins and relics) of past forms of life, and their aim is to restore and display, as accurately as possible, the original forms of life of which these remains, even in their state of decay, are tokens or manifestations."¹⁹ White's traditionalist starts with the conviction that there was a "real past" to which these remains once belonged and to which the later representations of that past, so often thought to be "history," must refer. Now we may be dubious about the scientific *knowability* test of the "reality" of past events, and concur with White that the historian's extrapolation from the remains is just a version, sometimes even a self-serving one. But how often do all of us slip into the kind of common sense empiricism that leads us to think that the same approach we take to knowing physical reality must also pertain to studying the past.²⁰ This is old, of course. For "history" using "science as the model" has from the mid-18th century (as the library, the museum, the dictionary and the encyclopedia), come to guarantee knowledge about the events of the past.²¹ Along with this science model comes investment in the power of empirical proof such that a new piece of evidence can completely change our interpretation of past events.²² Still, what scholar, traditionalist or not-so-traditional, does not defer to the newest evidentiary remains of a past or search for *the* artifact that reverses the going story? Historical remains, after all, stand so concretely and irrefutably, especially in their "state of decay," as "manifestations" of what they originally were. Well, we know this. What is the problem? My rationale for opening up Hayden White's problem of "history" as "something real" referenced is that I think that this has "come back to bite us," especially as the "historical turn" is instituted as the "archival turn" and "the films themselves" are brought forward as evidence in support of a narrative about the evolution of a technological form understood as the motion picture film. And further, as archival relics, these films evidence how it was that they themselves once existed as material objects. Who, after all, can resist the claims to evidentiary knowledge of the past secreted in the decaying artifact?

Neruda's body: the sequence and the index

To test our susceptibility, I offer a case centered on the historian's evidentiary *piece de resistance* – the excavated relic. Additionally, since the relic in question is caught up in the cause of a national narrative, the case has some of the features I want to dramatize. In April 2013, the Chilean government agreed to exhume the body

of Nobel laureate poet and national hero Pablo Neruda.²³ At issue was whether or not, as a supporter of illegally deposed president Salvador Allende, Neruda was poisoned in the clinic where he had gone for cancer treatment. Because Neruda died there on 23 September 1973, only twelve days after the 11 September date of the American-supported coup against Allende, suspicions were aroused. Over the following forty years, witnesses, including Neruda's chauffeur, have come forward to make their claim that the poet was murdered.²⁴ Here is a national narrative in dispute, the outcome of that narrative hanging in the balance and depending on new scientific laboratory results. We are in luck, we think, ready as we are to defer to an empirical certainty-to-end-all-uncertainties-forensic evidence. But of course such cases bring back not only scientific knowability but a broad historical determinism and its causality structure in which later events are the consequence of earlier events.

History-as-determined here borrows the scientificity of the forensic test for the existence of toxins, gaining credibility by association with the biological sciences. Here, then, is how the empirical-analytical method, aspiring to the status of science, tempts us to think: it can be proven that Neruda's death was caused by poison, and thus that Neruda, the national hero, was murdered as the consequence of his support for Chilean democracy. Evidence of this political murder is deposited in Neruda's bones. Further we have, in the recourse to the Chilean national narrative, "history" as truth-telling about the nation, but also, "history" synonymous with a "real past" that can be accessed and verified by means of its own remains, those survivals that themselves contain the scientific knowledge of prior events.

For us, Neruda's bones and their relation to Chilean national "history" epitomize what Philip Rosen takes to be the historian's indexical axis – *both* the narrative sequence and the evidentiary trace as indices.²⁵ Here, borrowing the concept of the index from film theory, he pins down the historian's reliance on the artifact, a kind of *indexical trace* whose referent itself had a "real" past presence.²⁶ Then Rosen asks his heretical question. He wants to know how is it that the historian can confidently reconstruct an entire past society from the evidentiary source that is no more than a small fragment of the whole that "once was." Here Rosen thinks is where traditional historians are like most archival preservationists, dedicated as they are to accurately restoring the past to the present.²⁷ Hayden White, making a similar point, describes traditional methodology as based on the assumption that the "past represents itself in the remains – documentary, monumental, and archaeological – that it has left behind..." and this means that historians are effectively "passive receivers," relaying messages from the past that require nothing more than decoding.²⁸ In other words, White thinks that these conduit historians do not see that what they have passed on to us is their actively shaped construction.

In a recent critique of historians White returns to Michael Oakeshott's distinction between "the historical past," that past constructed by the historian who has inferred it from the evidence, and the "practical past," the past of nostalgia and remembrance constituted in contrast by the memories of groups and individuals.²⁹ Summarizing Oakeshott, White is at his most constructivist when he says that "The historical past is and will be whatever historians decide to make of it."³⁰ And he has not a little disdain for this professional "historical past" which he finds to be "a complex web of nothing but revisions."³¹ Taking a somewhat similar tack, Sande Cohen, changeling Deleuze, gives even more emphasis to the present and the past as jointly constructed when he says: "Remember, we are constantly dismantling the past and assembling the present; we are constantly disassembling the present to have a different effect/affect of and with a past."³² Undoubtedly we are unmaking as well as making, but, following Cohen, we also must finally leave aside Oakeshott's two "pasts" for the difficult philosophical problem of the "coexistence" of past and present which defies practical tests. In Cohen's Deleuzian formulation of past and present as "coexistent," the past is not completely "over and gone," but it is there so insistently that we cannot exactly say that for the present the past doesn't exist at all. The advantage of Deleuze's theorization of the problem of the persistent past is in the way that it admits unknowability and

refuses evidentiary proof all the while holding out for proof. Considering this past, he thinks, "We cannot say that it was. It no longer exists, it does not exist, but it insists, it consists, it *is*."³³ So against the total impossibility of empirical knowability, the past still "insists." And who can refuse the "insistence" of past events even if we doubt that we could confirm their existence?

So if "the past" finally does and doesn't exist and the historian cannot help but constitute "the present" as much as "the past," it is with some trepidation that I return to my topic, "the historical turn." Why? Who am I to presume to constitute "the turn?" For the moment, forging ahead without letting these questions slow us down, we can consider other attempts to think about "the turn," starting with the consensus that one aspect was a turn "toward" a more rigorous historiography.³⁴ Later, in Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacey's overview, the "turn" was understood as taking up cultural "locatedness" or "historical specificity," perceived as a need at a time in the field when "theoretical universalisms" had proven unproductive.³⁵ Thus if this was a turn "toward," it was also a turn, around 1978, "away" from the "obsession" with theory, Kuhn and Stacey's choice of words to describe the tenor of the 1970s.³⁶ They then go on to characterize "Screen Theory" as having its foundations in psychoanalysis, semiotics and Althusserian philosophy, and marked by a critical attitude towards "historicism."³⁷ Finally, they suggest that the "new film history" with its more "self-reflexive" attitude toward method and a "quest to integrate theory with history" did not exactly abandon theory.³⁸ If not abandoned, we must ask, however, where did theory go? One might speculate in this regard that if the "integration" part of the project has been so successful we would no longer see history as distinct from theory. What then is this relation of integration? If in 1989 André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning advanced the position that a historical point is after all a theoretical point, informed by a theoretical framework (whether the historian knows it or not), one would have expected more work along these lines, right?³⁹ Of course one might also wonder whether after the "historical turn" it has been easier to assert the reverse – that a theoretical point, historically situated, is a historical point. And yes, Gaudreault and Gunning do warn about the "trap of historicism," then aligned with the conviction that historical films themselves could be studied by any "objective" means.⁴⁰

From the above we can at least establish that the critical attitude, broadly associated with Althusserian "anti-historicism" in 1970s film theory encouraged a "reflexive" approach to historical method. Working within that ostensibly self-aware tradition, I should then explain that I know that my next move is a traditional one – the recourse to the earlier moment to make sense of the later. This is the moment we might call "pre-turn" and it is where I find a curious assessment of the intellectual climate of that time in Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's *Screen* editorial in an issue covering the 1977 Edinburgh Film Festival special event on history and memory. Here is editor Nowell-Smith: "Paradoxically (at first sight) this revival of interest in history coincides with a crisis of confidence in the term history itself, a crisis which threatens to invest not just simple historicist notions of the past as cause of the present but the validity of historical inquiry as such."⁴¹ It was, of course, the year *before* the 1978 Brighton Conference in which Nowell-Smith noted that this new interest in history was "coinciding," as he says, with what appeared to be its antithesis – a "crisis of confidence" *in* or disillusionment *with* the term "history," just as the project of "history" was taken up. Now first let's ask the almost too obvious question: what happened to the "crisis of confidence" in the term "history?" Or, to rephrase it, where *was* the "crisis of confidence" in the term "history" when the field took the "historical turn?" But a word of caution: such questions as these assume first that contradictory beliefs cannot possibly be held at once and second that one event-in-time must follow another, the present succeeding the past, because there can be *only one time at once* and therefore that there can be no such thing as co-existing temporalities. Finally, since the "historical turn" could not have been the "historical turn" in 1978 why would any historian today insist that Brighton marked the "historical turn?"⁴²

There is of course another way around the apparent contradiction in which the field took up that with which it had "lost confidence," and here the new philosophy of history questions an intellectual history approach in

which the movements of concepts are mapped as though they were discrete intellectual events. And the alternative? This might mean seeing concepts less as discretely occurring events than as more in-discrete or even, shall we say, promiscuous. On this point, Hayden White throws his oar in again, taking the position that there can be no "history of concepts" since concepts only exist in thought and aren't like either events or objects which he sees as phenomena of time and space.⁴³

Perhaps this in-discretion allows former anti-historicisms to be brought back in such a way that they are today experienced as coexistent: the French structuralist anti-historicism followed by Lacanian anti-historicism and Frankfurt School German anti-historicism.⁴⁴ However, it was the British *Screen's* Althusserian anti-historicism that can be found threaded through Jean-Louis Comolli's technique and ideology articles from *Cahiers du Cinéma* that was most influential.⁴⁵ However what film and media studies selectively took from Althusser's anti-historicist polemic had little to do with issues in the philosophy of history and his reference to the "ideological continuum of linear time" became integrated into the critique of film narrative rather than the critique of narrative history.⁴⁶

Remember that my topic is not so much "why we took" the "historical turn" as it is how, given such avowed Althusserian anti-historicism we could still have taken the "historical turn." Which is a question of how concepts elude the historian's attempts to order them as intellectual events-in-time. Thus rather than attempting to narrate "what happened" I will propose a theory, a hypothesis that we can use to encourage the broadest variation of interpretations we can put on conceptual shifts while remembering that we are not dealing with historical events.

So I have pulled from Foucault's *mélange* of metaphors the most tantalizing historical knowledge of poisons and antidotes. First, to say that I take the antidote to mean the counter to whatever it is that would take hold in the system. Here I propose one theory to explain why *at* and *into* the "historical turn" the field has not entirely succumbed to the positions aligned with what we might, for the sake of argument, call "vulgar historicism." Let us call these the theoretical antidotes that counter the tendencies of traditional approaches to history, that is, antidotes to objectivity, to determinism, to the belief that "history" refers to "something real" and past events can be "known" in the present.⁴⁷ I would make the strongest case that 1970s film theory has provided the antidote to such conceptual "poisons." We could take the "historical turn" because in post-structuralist anti-historicism we already had the theoretical antidotes to these perceived (theoretical) dangers.

Theoretical antidotes:

1. Written history does not correspond to events in the past.
2. The later event is not the "truth" of the earlier.
3. Historical understanding begins with the language of the historian, not with events in the past.
4. The claim to "reality" is ideological.
5. There is no "real" to know except via signs.

Conceptual "poisons:"

1. History is what happened.
2. The facts determine the meaning of the event.
3. Language can accurately represent.
4. To find the origin is to find the meaning.
5. The present is the outcome of events in the past.

Here, then, is the thinking: why should we be concerned with maintaining an anti-representational stance, as does the new philosophy of history if we already know the impossibility of representing "reality?" If we already realise the disjuncture between language and its referent? To use another metaphor, 1970s theory has already inoculated the field against the conceptual dangers of historicism. However during the "archival turn" we have been dealing with other rules governing other kinds of "realities" – the chemical and the computational – as they relate to extant historical objects. Here is where something of the historical "real" that we thought we had thoroughly critiqued returns, and Hayden White's myth of referentiality comes around, reinforced not only by the science model, but by the indexical guarantee at the level of the emulsion scratch made by a projector. Restoration is the problem of historicism in a microcosm because it aims to return the historical archival film print to the intact object that it was when it was first exhibited.⁴⁸

We pick up these issues at the present moment of ambivalence about digital processes when the "the real" is now posed against digital restoration particularly when the archivists' dedication to the "internal history" of the motion picture print is tested and the stakes are framed as the "authenticity" of the digitally restored "film."⁴⁹ The assumption here is that the digital simulation does not register signs of historical change as does the photochemical print and cannot therefore index its own history. Witness Paolo Cherchi Usai's question: "But if digital technology tends to erase the 'historicity' as indexical indications on the face of the artifact, this is fundamentally a wrong tool for our job, which is the job of protecting and promoting historicity, insofar as history matters to a curator – which may or may not be the case in the future?"⁵⁰ The unreadability of the "internal history" here supports an idea of the analog as "more real" than digital simulation, a move that is highly ideological.⁵¹ Perhaps this ideology even contributes to the belief that digital files are immaterial when they are just invisible.⁵² Assuming the immateriality of the digital changes the subject from existence itself to signs of existence – and ultimately the historical referent that may or may not have existed before the camera. Thus it is that the "face of the artifact," observable to the eye, diverts attention from an important point that the new philosophy of history might think to make. For here, both digital files and archival motion picture film print whether decaying cellulose nitrate or cellulose acetate, are historical relics in Heidegger's philosophical sense of the relic which is where something quite larger is the issue – the question of existence.

Returning to the relevant section of *Being and Time* re-stages a moment in which 1970s film theory and the critique of historicism came together. Like Heidegger's relic, the archival film print object may appear to be the existing historical object par excellence, but this should not tempt us to think that the digital simulation does not exist. For Heidegger, on the one hand there is existence, on the other, an existence that "is no longer" but that is not exactly a "past."⁵³ For Heidegger, objects such as antiquities and ruins, are "past," although his untranslatable *Da-sein*, or "there-being" is not strictly past. Why is this difference important for film theory? Because the "there-being" that exists "no longer" but that is not exactly past becomes in Heidegger the "*having-been-there*."⁵⁴ Now to finally make the leap here that I have been waiting to make-film and photographic theory adapted what had been a concern with the "once was" of historical time. That is, Roland Barthes's "having-been-there" of the photographic image was borrowed from the problem of existence. Once applied to the development of aesthetic theory (the "impression of the real"), "*having-been-there*" lost connection with the philosophy of history.⁵⁵

For Heidegger, however, the premise of realism has nothing to do with aesthetics for it is the philosophical problem of whether the external world is "objectively present in a real way." This particular realism is committed to the belief that the world's reality not only needs proving but is finally "capable of proof."⁵⁶ But ultimately, the philosopher completely shuts down this line of inquiry, declaring the philosophical question of the demonstrable objective presence of the world to be "an impossible one."⁵⁷ Yet there is something else that brings us full circle to the connection between film theory, archival objects, and the critique of historicism.

Fredric Jameson, revisiting German philosophy, has said that one way of reconsidering Heidegger's special elaboration of *Vorstellung* as "representation" is to see that "the real" performs another function: "Nothing less," Jameson says, than the "construction of *certainty*."⁵⁸ The "certain construction of the real" yields not "the real" exactly, because we know the ideological underpinnings of such evidentiary claims, so not "the real," really, but something that we should still be very wary of wherever we find it, whether in the discourse around restoration or in film historiography, and that is the kind of certainty-to-end-all-uncertainties that the indexical relic promises, particularly if it is visible to the eye.

News flash: poisons and antidotes

In April, 2014, *The Santiago Times* cited Chilean government reports that the DNA results from the autopsy on the exhumed body are inconclusive. Further they cannot yet confirm that the body is that of the poet Neruda. Thus it is that the Chilean poet laureate and Communist Party member, critic of dictator Augusto Pinochet, cannot be added to the list of 28,459 victims of imprisonment and torture between 11 September 1973, and 10 March 1990.⁵⁹ For now, we could say that the strong political conviction that Neruda was poisoned is in the ascendance although political analysis may not be evenly matched against DNA evidence proving that he was *not* poisoned.

One more time let's ask how science lends its model to "history." The poison countered with the antidote has the immediate advantage in considering the empirical-analytical tradition because what does it show other than the evidentiary dance of events and their effects in time. Is there a more certain and irreversible event than death by poison? Yet the antidote dramatically challenges the inevitability of events-in-time since it intervenes to reverse the order of events as it "neutralizes" the poison. If we just consider arsenic, undoubtedly the most popular poison, certain pharmaceutical therapies can save the patient's life if applied in a short window of time. However, medical sources indicate that there is no study that confirms one hundred percent success with this protocol. Thus not even medicine can be relied upon to evidence the clear causality popularly associated with the biological sciences. Where does that leave an unscientific field like the history, the humanities discipline that yet defers to science? As for the theoretical antidote that counters the dangers of historicism (borrowing Foucault's metaphor), falling back on the science model (as we invariably do) means that we cannot guarantee its effectivity either.⁶⁰

Notes

¹ Joan Wallach Scott, *Finding Critical History*, in James Banner, John Gillis (eds.), *Becoming Historians*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2009, p. 46, says that although Foucault is often cited many "yet refuse the epistemological challenge he posed."

² Wolfgang Ernst, *Digital Memory and the Archive*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2013, p. 55, thinks that "archaeology" has been hard to resist as a metaphor, but has led to "fatal misunderstanding" of Foucault; see Wanda Strauven, *Media Archaeology: Where Film History, Media Art, and New Media (Can) Meet*, in Julia Noordegraaf, Cosetta Saba, Barbara Le Maître, Vinzenz Hediger (eds.), *Preserving and Exhibiting Media Art: Challenges and Perspectives*, University of Amsterdam Press, Amsterdam 2013, pp. 68-73, for a comparison of major approaches that claim the term "media

archaeology." Seminal has been Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archaeology," in *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 14, nos. 2-3, 2004, pp. 75-117. The earliest use of the term may be Id., "The New Film History," in *Sight and Sound*, vol. 55, no. 4, 1986, pp. 246-251, and see Id., *General Introduction: Early Cinema: From Linear History to Mass Media Archaeology*, in Thomas Elsaesser, Keith Barker (eds.), *Early Cinema: Space/Frame/Narrative*, British Film Institute, London 1990, pp. 1-8. But "New Film History" is not always linked to Foucault. See, for example, James Chapman, Mark Glancy, Sue Harper (eds.), *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndsmills-New York, 2007.

³ Michel Foucault, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, Vintage Books, New York 2010 [1971], p. 90.

⁴ See Frank Ankersmit, Hans Kellner (eds.), *A New Philosophy of History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1995.

⁵ Alun Munslow, *The New History*, Pearson-Longman, Harlow 2003, p. 29.

⁶ See Keith Jenkins, Alun Munslow (eds.), *The Nature of History Reader*, Routledge, London-New York 2004, pp. 224-239; see Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ 2002, for an example of "deconstructive history."

⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2004; Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge*, trans. Hassan Melehy, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1994; Roland Barthes, *The Discourse of History*, in Id., *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard, Hill and Wang, New York 1986, pp. 127-140.

⁸ The question of the German critique of historicism is difficult to summarise succinctly, especially since those associated with it have been recently reconsidered. For our purposes, see Charles Bambach, *Weimar Philosophy and the Crisis in Historical Thinking*, in Peter E. Gordon, John P. McCormick (eds.), *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton-Oxford 2013, especially pp. 144-147, for the commonality between Heidegger and Walter Benjamin as regards their rejection of historicism.

⁹ Robert Doran, *Choosing the Past: Hayden White and the Philosophy of History*, in Robert Doran (ed.), *Philosophy of History After Hayden White*, Bloomsbury, London 2013, p. 19. This is because "metahistory" has come to mean the widely practiced "history plus concepts." White's position differs from others, one example of which is seen from as early as *Metahistory* where he makes a distinction between the philosophy of history and "straight history" to the effect that straight history or "proper history" is a philosophy of history that is unaware that it is informed by a philosophy (Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1973, XI). But he also thinks that the philosophy of history has features of the "proper history," although its material is the construct rather than data (*Idem*, pp. 427-428).

¹⁰ A list of the established rather than emerging would include British academics Keith Jenkins and Alun Munslow, European Frank Ankersmit and the Americans, Hayden White and Sande Cohen. From within film and media studies undoubtedly Vivian Sobchack, Robert Rosenstone, and Philip Rosen. Of the group of women's historians there are yet too few, but Joan Wallach Scott and Carolyn Steedman should be cited for working within history, the discipline, and for daring to develop there the relevance of Foucault and Derrida, respectively. See also, Frank Ankersmit, *Bibliographic Essay*, in Frank Ankersmit, Hans Kellner (eds.), *A New Philosophy of History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1995, pp. 278-283.

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- ¹¹ Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth: Philosophical Papers Vol. I*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991.
- ¹² Ankersmit's distinction is often quoted: "a description *refers* to reality... whereas a representation (the entire text) can only be said to be *about* reality as well as *about* other historians' representations (the historiography):" Frank Ankersmit, *Historical Representation*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2001, p. 41.
- ¹³ See Hayden White, *Metahistory*, cit., pp. 31-38.
- ¹⁴ See Tom Gunning, *Attractions: How They Came into the World*, in Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Revisited*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam [1989] 2006, p. 36, where he proposes ways around thinking of the "cinema of attractions" as defining a "specific period," but also reiterates that it is a historical approach to thinking about spectatorship.
- ¹⁵ Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Revisited*, cit., pp. 71-72, alternatively suggests that the "cinema of attractions" can be read, following Erkki Huhtamo's "cyclical" approach to media archaeology, as "*topos*" that appear in the first decade and again in the "Spielberg-Lucas-Coppola cinema of effects," as she quotes Gunning.
- ¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, SUNY Press, Albany 1996, in part. Ch. 5, sections 72-77.
- ¹⁷ Hayden White, "The Historical Event," in *differences*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2008, p. 31.
- ¹⁸ See Jane M. Gaines, "What Happened to the Philosophy of Film History?," in *Film History*, vol. 25, nos. 1-2, 2013, pp. 70-80, where I discuss the other ambiguity of "history," which can be both the events and the account of those events, a point often made by theorists of history.
- ¹⁹ Hayden White, *History as Fulfillment*, in Robert Doran (ed.), *Philosophy of History After Hayden White*, cit., p. 35.
- ²⁰ Alun Munslow, *The New History*, cit., p. 8. There he also argues that "the belief in reality is actually a belief in its knowability, that is, what it really means."
- ²¹ *Idem*, p. 46.
- ²² *Idem*, p. 60.
- ²³ Ilan Stavans, "Disturbing Pablo Neruda's Rest," in *New York Times*, 10 April, 2013, p. A 23.
- ²⁴ See also John Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and his Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents*, The New Press, London-New York 2004.
- ²⁵ Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2001, p. 354.
- ²⁶ *Idem*, pp. 20, 112.
- ²⁷ *Idem*, p. 117.
- ²⁸ Hayden White, *History as Fulfillment*, cit., pp. 40-41.
- ²⁹ See Michael Oakeshott, *Present, Future, and Past*, in *On History and Other Essays*, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis 1999, pp. 21-23.
- ³⁰ Hayden White, *Guilty of History?: The long durée of Paul Ricoeur*, in Robert Doran (ed.), *The Fiction of Narrative*, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore 2010, p. 337.
- ³¹ Hayden White, *Comment*, in Robert Doran (ed.), *The Fiction of Narrative*, cit., p. 213.
- ³² Sande Cohen, *History Out of Joint: Essays on the Use and Abuse of History*, Johns Hopkins, Baltimore 2006 p. 249. See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, Columbia University Press, New York 1994, 81-82.
- ³³ *Idem*, p. 82.

³⁴ See Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History," cit., pp. 246-251.

³⁵ Annette Kuhn, Jackey Stacey, *Screen Histories: An Introduction*, in Id. (eds.), *Screen Histories: A Screen Reader*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998, p. 8.

³⁶ *Idem*, p. 1.

³⁷ *Idem*, p. 2.

³⁸ *Idem*, p. 5.

³⁹ André Gaudreault, Tom Gunning, *Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History*, in Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Revisited*, cit., p. 367.

⁴⁰ *Idem*, p. 376.

⁴¹ Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "History/Production/Memory," in *Screen*, Winter 1977-78, p. 5. That issue included articles referencing the interview with Michel Foucault on the film version of *I, Pierre Rivière*, in *Edinburgh Magazine*, "History/Production/Memory," no. 2, 1977. To fill out Nowell-Smith's reference, this skepticism toward empiricism was seen in the French concern about the empirical tendencies in André Bazin's realism. See Colin MacCabe, "Theory and Film: Principles of Realism and Pleasure," in *Screen*, vol. 17, no. 3, Autumn 1976.

⁴² The answer to this question, following White on Oakshott is that historians make "the historical past," leaving room for participants of the 1978 Brighton Conference to make their own "practical past," especially if they remember it differently. See notes 30 and 31.

⁴³ Hayden White, *Comment*, cit., p. 210.

⁴⁴ On French anti-historicisms see François Dosse, *History of Structuralism Vol. 2*, trans. Deborah Glassman, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1997, pp. 429-436; on the German tradition see note 8.

⁴⁵ Jean-Louis Comolli, *Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field*, in Nick Browne (ed.), *Cahiers du Cinéma, 1969-72*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1990, p. 247. See David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, "Linearity, Materialism and the Study of Early Cinema," in *Wide Angle*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1983, p. 5.

⁴⁶ Louis Althusser, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster, Verso, London, 1970, p. 103.

⁴⁷ Alun Munslow, *The New History*, cit., p. 182, thinks that "to insist on knowing the meaning of unknowable past reality... is unrealistic."

⁴⁸ See note 27.

⁴⁹ Paolo Cherchi Usai, *Silent Cinema: An Introduction*, British Film Institute, London 2000, p. 147, refers to the variables to consider here, from countries exhibited to format, film stock, and generation of the print.

⁵⁰ Paolo Cherchi Usai, David Francis, Alexander Horwath, Michael Loebenstein (eds.), *Film Curatorship: Archives, Museums, and the Digital Marketplace*, Austrian Film Museum and SYNEMA, Wien 2008, p. 207.

⁵¹ Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2009, p. 133, says that the analog is "never well defined." David Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge-London 2007, p. 5, finds this ideology in popular science fiction film.

⁵² See Jonathan Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format*, Duke University Press, Durham 2012, p. 7, on how magnetic inscription is not immaterial but merely invisible.

⁵³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, cit., p. 348.

⁵⁴ *Idem*, p. 349.

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⁵⁵ Roland Barthes, *The Rhetoric of the Image*, in Id., *Image/Music/Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, Hill and Wang, New York 1977, pp. 32-51; see Mary Ann Doane, "Indexicality: Trace and Sign: Introduction," in *differences*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2007, pp. 1-6, where she questions the relation between indexicality and the realist aesthetics understood as the ideology of realism that it came to have. For us, Heidegger's philosophical problem was adapted by Christian Metz for a theory of film language taking inspiration from the photographic illogic of "place present but time past," becoming the film viewer "absorbed" by the "There it is" (on screen) which is "really" absent. See Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, trans. Michael Taylor, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1974, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, cit., p. 192.

⁵⁷ *Idem*, p. 191.

⁵⁸ Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, Verso, London-New York, 2002, p. 47.

⁵⁹ In 2011, another 9,795 victims were identified. See Museo de la Memoria de los Derechos Humanos, Santiago, Chile: www.museodelamemoria.cl, last visit December 2014.

⁶⁰ Thanks to Nick Baer and Thomas Elsaesser for valuable suggestions.

The Cinema Spectator: A Rapidly-Mutating Species Viewing a Medium That Is Losing Its Bearings¹

Ever since the digital tsunami began radically to scramble the boundaries between media, cinema – or in any event cinema as we knew it – has, in some people's view, been *in the process of dying*. In a recently-published volume, entitled moreover *The End of Cinema* (duly followed by a question mark), Philippe Marion and I explore the effects of the most recent technological innovations on cinema and the crisis the medium is going through *in the digital era*.² In this volume, we attempt to demonstrate that, while cinema itself is far from dying out, there is nonetheless *something about cinema* that is dying, if only an "idea of cinema," to borrow the French title of the latest book by Dudley Andrew.³ As we are little disposed to sorrow, we even suggest, basing ourselves on our hypothesis of the "double birth of media," that it is possible to see this relative and partial death brought about by the advent of digital technology as something like the sign a *third birth of cinema* (a question I will address here).

Even though, as we know, the digital turn has produced a hitherto unseen *convergence* of media, this development is also concomitant with the production of a great number of divergences, if only that between *what cinema was* (or rather "the idea we had of cinema") before the digital shift and what cinema is in the process of becoming. Thus, among the most essential transformations it has brought about, the digital turn has thus given rise to the following phenomena:

- films are most often shown in *non-celluloid* formats;
- films are most often seen on *non-movie-theatre* screens;
- movie theatre screens often show *non-cinema* productions.

Here you will note the repetition of the same *seme par excellence* of being and non-being: "non." It is as if the emergence of digital technology gave rise to a sort of intercourse between what is and what isn't or as if the digital crisis instilled a kind of negative of itself.

Cinema itself is undergoing profound upheaval, but the wide-ranging changes being experienced by the creature known as the spectator are not far behind, especially given the fact that what viewers are confronted with

today is not the radical transformation of a single medium, cinema for example, but the radical transformation of the entire media ecosystem, all of whose elements are undergoing the same enormous effects brought on by the scrambling of boundaries between media to which the advent of digital culture has given rise. A scrambling to such an extent that cinema as a medium, and even our idea of it, is in a state of complete regression and dilution, is back in the running in places we did not expect it. There, against all expectations, it is proliferating, whether in material form such as the digital video disc or in a completely dematerialized form such as video on demand.

Nothing is simple when it comes to measuring the effects of the shocks and aftershocks of what Philippe Marion and I have called the gradual digitalizing of media. For, alongside this relative "regression" on the part of cinema, or rather, once again, of *the idea we had of cinema*, there has also and at the same time been a "progression." It is now the case that:

- films are found on a number of *new* supports (discs, thumb drives, etc.);
- films are shown on a multiplicity of *new* screens;
- films are thus finding *new* audiences.

Here you will note the repetition of the same *seme par excellence* of "innovation," the word "new." It is as if the advent of the digital brought new life to an old "affair." To such an extent that alongside those who, in the "cinema" sphere, never tired of announcing the death of the medium, many people rejoice, on the contrary, that cinema is gaining ground and is "more alive than ever."⁴ Indeed there is a rather paradoxical situation, that of cinema's *proliferation* alongside its *dissipation*, because while DVDs enable films to be viewed in a much more leisurely manner than before, the purely "cinematic" aspect of the film in question may now seem diluted, if only because it is no longer on... *film*. It nevertheless remains true that while the "DNA" of a film on DVD has lost some of its uniquely filmic "genes," what we hold in our hands when we grasp one of these discs remains within the realm, just the same, of the "cinematic," the shift from photo-chemical to digital technology notwithstanding. This shift, by the way, has caused the film "consumer" to lose many of his or her certainties concerning cinema's identity, as it has turned all our screening habits *topsy-turvy*, in particular because of what I would call "film consultation:" I put on a DVD and can *consult* the sequence of images and sounds as I see fit, at the speed I want, in the order I want, and how I want. It's a little like flipping through a book. The appearance of this means of "consulting films" is, in my view, a social phenomenon not sufficiently taken into account. Before, it was impossible and unthinkable to "consult" a film. We could only, quite simply, watch it (or rather "audio-view" it).⁵ This "novelty" has enormous repercussions for the spectator, who has become, by virtue of this very situation, neither more nor less than a *mutant*.

From this we might legitimately conclude that we are witnessing the advent of a *new kind of relation between film and viewer*.

But this is not all: the digital shift has also made it possible to introduce new kinds of "filmed" entertainment into movie theatres until now reserved almost exclusively for film. These new forms of entertainment do not correspond to our notion, still in force today, of cinema. They include such "non-film" presentations as operas, ballets, visits to museum exhibitions, sporting events, etc., and are a growing phenomenon in what I have suggested we call the *tele-agora*.

From this we might conclude that we are witnessing not only the advent of a new kind of relation between film and viewer but also a *new kind of relation with the movie theatre*.

This same kind of relation has, of course, taken hold amongst those specialized viewers we call scholars of "film studies" (a now quaint expression, which some people would not hesitate to call antiquated) who would be remiss if they overlooked, seated at their viewing stations, the advent of the *tele-agora* phenomenon.

Indeed the persistence of the *tele-agora* in movie theatres should attract the attention of scholars, all the more

so because it was *television*, whose arrival called into question the exclusivity of photo-chemical technology for the production of "moving images," that served as the catalyst for cinema's first "existential" crisis. And while some may erect boundaries between the two media (in particular by assigning them distinct social and cultural roles), there was always a degree of overlap between them, if only because on this new medium called television were shown *films* from that *quite different* medium (*at the time*) that was cinema. In this way, television enabled film viewers to cast off the yoke of the experience "imposed" on a "captive" audience in the darkened movie theatre. Video recording and later digital technology then took the viewer even further, not only enabling them to *consult* films but also giving them complete freedom to view films *where* and *when* they wanted. The new kind of relation with films that resulted drove a wedge between what we might call the *classical* consumption of a film and the other *viewing circumstances* made possible by what could be described as the "video apparatus" which, since the advent of television, has made it possible to audio-view a film outside the sacrosanct movie theatre by means of a support that is subtler and more user-friendly, we might say, than celluloid film. The succeeding iterations of the video apparatus (from television to digital technology by way of the VCR) have provided viewing circumstances of a kind so different from those that prevailed in the "classical cinema paradigm" that it might be worthwhile to conclude that they are quite simply propelling us into another paradigm. This is the step I grant myself leave to take here by proposing that we distinguish between *cinema films*⁶ on the one hand and *video-cinema films* on the other. *Video-cinema* is thus the phenomenon that joins every aspect of cinema and is provided to me outside the classical framework defined by the projection of a celluloid film – its real projection we might say – on supports that grant me access to the film in other *viewing circumstances* in which I am free, thanks to my remote control, to interrupt or modify my experience.

Video-cinema: a portmanteau word which enables us to grasp at a glance that we are changing paradigms. A word which cuts up reality arbitrarily, like any other word, but which to me appears a suitable tool for better understanding the world... For nearly sixty years now *video-cinema* has been finding its own path and shaping a new spectator, while "cinema" alone, in the classical sense of the term, is in the process of becoming a memory (an already vague one in the case of younger generations).

Video-cinema is thus the product of this third birth of cinema I mentioned above, and which Philippe Marion and I discuss in our book. The first birth was the one which made possible, through the invention of a machine which recorded analytical photographic images capable of restoring movement, the emergence of the *kine-matograph*, while the second birth was that which, with the process of institutionalization in the early 1910s, gave birth to *cinema per se*.

With this particle accelerator the digital, today *video-cinema*, whose reign had begun in modest fashion on the "small screen," is in the process of turning the "transaction" between spectator and film on its head. The reason is that the very "dispositions" of *video-cinema*, even in its most recent variants, encourage *discontinuous* and *non-linear* viewing (something television on its own did not permit). Today, in the early years of the 21st century, films are often consumed in bits and pieces, in segments, and in a relatively disordered manner.⁷ One may shriek in horror at such practices and heap opprobrium on those who engage in them, but that will not change the real world. We can only observe what is really happening: neither are spectators today what they once were. *Video-cinema* has liberated viewers from the confines of other people's programming and enabled them to exercise absolute control over the "unspooling" of the "film." As Roger Boussinot announced in 1967, the video tape recorder was an agent of mutation: "Wait a few more months for the miniaturization of the video tape recorder, and then its popularization, and cinema will have seen its most important transformation to date since 1895. In comparison, the shift from 'silent' to 'talking' cinema was a mere incident."⁸

And that is not all: this transformation of the conditions of the "consumption" of films is occurring at the same time as a series of other transformations which have been brought about, and which reach into the remotest

corners of planet cinema, by passing to digital technology (we might almost say "by the passing of digital technology, the way we speak of the passing of a hurricane or tornado"). With respect to transformations, we must acknowledge that the most important of all remains the lessening, mentioned earlier, of cinema's supremacy over all other audiovisual media. This was something Roland Barthes denounced way back in the 1960s: "cinema's imperialism over other visual information processes can be understood historically, but cannot be justified epistemologically."⁹

One of the most emblematic contemporary signs of the conclusion of the reign of the series "cinema" over other series employing "visual information techniques" is, to my eyes, the change to the identity of the principal film institution in France, the Centre National de Cinématographie (CNC), which in 2010 became the Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée (while keeping the same acronym). This tiny gesture has enormous meaning, in my view. The adoption of the expression "cinema and moving images" (to replace the rather old-fashioned term French term "*cinématographie*," little used today) clearly shows that the French institution was sensitive to the mood of the day and ready, in order to "modernize" its brand, to lessen cinema's role in the media concert.

Indeed what is suggested by hitching cinema to other "moving images" is that cinema, in the end, is only one possible manifestation of moving pictures, that it represents only one of the moving picture arts and industries. On an epistemological level this is true, absolutely true even, however much that brings tears to the eyes of the greatest cinephiles amongst us. A small consolation: at least they didn't go so far as to completely banish the word cinema and proclaim themselves the Centre national de l'image animée (but who can swear that this will not happen some day?).

Cinema, therefore, has not escaped unharmed from the "digitalizing" process. It has even lost a great deal of its aura. Indeed the advent of digital technology and the scrambling of boundaries that it has brought about have indisputably knocked cinema off its pedestal:

- a film is no longer a mysterious presence that I can only see by means of the beam of light arriving from behind my head and passing over my shoulder, coming from *I'm-not-sure-where-exactly* by means of an apparatus hidden from view. The end of the aura that accompanied the model of the model of the cave;
- by dematerialising, a film has become so light and nebulous that for some time now I have been able to hold one (or several!) in my hand, place it on the seat of my car and take it home; I can thus do whatever I like with it before starting it up with a device located in front of me that I control and which enables me to manipulate the images and sounds however I like as they flow past. The loss of the aura of the untouchable object, inaccessible to the average person and over which one has no hold or influence;
- the film is no longer necessarily viewed by me lurking in the shadows of a "viewing temple," my neck twisted in a spongy seat that obliges me to watch from a low-angle perspective an imposing image, magnified to the point where it dominates me and saturates my field of vision. The loss of the aura of a sacred object that has become profane.

Cinema, moreover, no longer lording it over other audiovisual series, is seen in a sense as one element of an all-encompassing series, the *cultural series moving images*. Cinema is no longer the "whole thing" it once was; it has become a *part* of a whole. This is something the Parisian daily newspaper *Libération* remarked back in 2007:

*What the digital revolution has changed is people's perception of cinema: in their wisdom, and without ceasing to love it, we have taken it off its pedestal. Cinema has seen its position weakened, it has been juxtaposed and compared: it has taken up position, albeit a privileged one, amongst the other objects, images, sounds and colours that the varieties of digital culture offer dangle before people's eyes. Cinema was an absolute; it has become relative.*¹⁰

All the screens in the world, portable to one degree or another, now place on the same level cinematic masterpieces, everyday television programs, the most dazzling YouTube clips, the most maladroit amateur films and the most boring home movies. Everything has become relative in the world of moving images. Even the "hallowed" screen of the movie theatre has joined in, as it now hosts, alongside the finest and most "authentic" *cinema films*, the most refined operas from the Met and the most vulgar professional boxing and wrestling matches. Spread the word: digital technology is the great universal media equalizer.

And yet this *cultural series moving images*, increasingly present in our hearts and minds today, has been around for a long time. But it was a well-kept secret! Film books in French show just how well-kept: they are all about cinema, with very few titles alluding to "*images animées*" or "*l'image animée*."¹¹ (The situation is quite different in English, where we find a plethora of books with the expressions *moving image* or *moving images* in their titles.¹²) To such an extent that, to take a significant example, while there are many books in French with the title *Histoire du cinéma*, none has yet been published with the less glamorous title *Histoire des images animées*. The wind, however, is beginning to shift. This, at least, is what would appear to be indicated by a series of lectures at France's Bibliothèque nationale in November-December 2013 entitled "*Histoire(s) des... images animées*." The program painted an undifferentiated picture of moving image media (cinema, television, video) on the basis of the following principles:

The series of lectures "*Histoire(s) de...*" opens up to the moving image: cinema, television, video... How have technological apparatuses established the bases for new forms of entertainment? Under what conditions did the major formats and genres (a feature film, a western, etc.) impose themselves? What sorts of cinematic and audiovisual practices have presided over propagandistic aims or, on the contrary, over uses that challenge the established order? When did people begin to bring together and preserve these images, seen as one of the invaluable archives of the century gone by? The talks making up "*Histoire(s) de...*" will deal with each of these questions in turn across the 20th century. Here moving image media, often studied separately from each other, will be woven together like the threads of a single history.¹³

Weaving "the threads of a single history:" this is the by no means commonplace ambition of this project in a new genre, whose principles should give today's historian pause. For historians, like spectators, are undergoing the aftershocks of the digital shift and the levelling of media that has flowed from it, and they too are destined to become, like the film spectator, a mutant species. Now that cinema has fallen from its pedestal, what history will we and should we write? Will we write the history of each medium "separately from each other," or will we take into account the fact that these media have woven together "the threads of a single history?"

Historians, for whom the scrambling of boundaries will be of constant concern, are faced with a huge dilemma. Will they limit their thinking and writing to cinema? Or will they also take *video-cinema* into account? Will they take into account every kind of moving image shown on movie theatre screens? And every kind of moving image seen on every kind of screen that exists today? We might finally see Athanasius Kircher, Christiaan Huyghes, Joseph Plateau and Émile Reynaud as the precursors not only of cinema, but also of television and video...¹⁴

Notes

¹ This text is a synthesis of two different but converging conference papers: "Quelle histoire?! Le cinéma est définitivement descendu de son piédestal," XXI International FilmForum conference, *At the Borders of (Film) History. Temporality, Archaeology, Theories*, Udine, April 2014; and "Mutatis mutandis, le spectateur est un mutant!," *D'un écran à l'autre: les mutations du spectateur* conference,

Université Paris 8, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi and the Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA), Paris, May 2014. The French version will be published by the INA in the latter half of 2015. Research for this article was carried out under the aegis of GRAFICS (Groupe de recherche sur l'avènement et la formation des institutions cinématographique et scénique). GRAFICS is a member of the international partnership TECHNÈS, which since 2012 has joined the efforts of three French-language university research groups, each of which is associated with a film archive and film school. These organizations are: in France, the cinema laboratory of the "Arts: pratiques et poétiques" group (headed by Laurent Le Forestier) at Université Rennes 2, the "Histoire et critique des arts" group at the same university, the Cinémathèque française and FÉMIS (École nationale supérieure des métiers de l'image et du son); in Switzerland, the "Dispositifs" group at the Université de Lausanne (headed by Maria Tortajada), the Swiss Film Archive and the École cantonale d'art de Lausanne; and in Canada, the GRAFICS group at the Université de Montréal (headed by André Gaudreault), the Cinémathèque québécoise and the INIS (Institut national de l'image et du son). The Quebec group also has as partners the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the Université de Montréal, the Observatoire du cinéma au Québec and Canal Savoir. GRAFICS receives funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Fonds de recherche du Québec - Société et culture.

² See André Gaudreault, Philippe Marion, *The End of Cinema? A Medium in Crisis in the Digital Era*, trans. Timothy Barnard, Columbia University Press, New York 2015.

³ Dudley Andrew, *Une idée du cinéma: De Bazin à nos jours*, trans. Olivier Mignon, SIC, Bruxelles 2014. Published originally as *What Cinema Is! Bazin's Quest and its Charge*, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden, MA 2010.

⁴ Thus Philippe Dubois writes: "Cinema [...] is more alive than ever, more multi-faceted, more abundant, more omnipresent than it has ever been." Philippe Dubois, *Présentation*, in Elena Biserna, Philippe Dubois, Frédéric Monvoisin (eds.), *Extended Cinema/Le cinéma gagne du terrain*, Campanotto Editore, Pasian di Prato 2010, p. 13. My emphasis.

⁵ In reality, the "film consultation" mode of use goes back to the appearance of the videotape, but it was limited at the time by the unwieldiness of the medium and the inability to manipulate it, as it remained linear, unlike the digital disc.

⁶ The sole fact that one must now resort to a seemingly pleonastic expression such as "cinema films" to distinguish films produced, say, by the film industry, from all other films produced outside institutional cinema (by television networks or within the institution opera, to take just those two examples) is quite symptomatic of the loss of bearings brought on by the scrambling of the boundaries between media today.

⁷ Paradoxically, these same devices, given the programming freedom they offer the viewer, make possible the *uninterrupted* viewing of television series, even though they are "intrinsically" divided into episodes spread over successive seasons.

⁸ Roger Boussinot, *Le Cinéma est mort. Vive le cinéma!*, Paris, Denoël 1967, pp. 47 and 50.

⁹ Roland Barthes, "Première Conférence internationale sur l'information visuelle," in *Communications*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1961, pp. 223-225.

¹⁰ Olivier Séguret, "Le Mot de la fin," in *Libération*, 11 July 2007.

¹¹ Three exceptions to this rule were published between 1968 and 2008: *Projection des images animées et reproduction des enregistrements sonores* (Jean Vivié, 1968); *L'Univers des images animées* (Charles Ford, 1973); and *Images animées: Propositions pour la sémiologie des messages visuels* (Bernard Leconte, 2008).

¹² Among these, the following volumes could be mentioned: *The Moving Image: A Guide to Cinematic Literacy* (Robert Gessner, 1968); *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Noël Carroll, 1996); *The Transparency of Spectacle: Meditations on the Moving Image* (Wheeler Winston Dixon, 1998); *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Vivian Sobchack, 2004); *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (Laura Mulvey, 2006); *Re-Imagining Animation: The Changing Face of the Moving Image* (Paul Wells, Johnny Hardstaff, 2008); *Locating the Moving Image: New Approaches to Film and Place* (Julia Hallam, Les Roberts, eds., 2013); and *Moving Images: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Film* (Andrea Sabbadini, 2014).

¹³ See the following site: http://www.bnf.fr/fr/evenements_et_culture/auditoriums/f.histoire_image.html?seance=122391134173 8. One of the people behind this initiative was Alain Carou, curator of the video collection at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, who told me that the series of lectures was very sparsely attended. This may be the result in part of the relative vagueness of the series title, "*Histoire(s) des... images animées*," which undoubtedly was less attractive than the history of a particular medium might have been (the history of cinema, or television, or video).

¹⁴ Translated by Timothy Barnard.

Section Header

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Paragraph 2: This is the second paragraph of text, continuing the list or series of items. It also appears to be a continuation of the information from the first paragraph.

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Writing the History of the "Cinema" Problem: Media Archaeology with Historical Epistemology

In the last thirty years, our discipline has known many shifts and changes, moving from film history to new film history, to media archeology, and possibly to cinema history. The variety of these names reflects transformations in methods and approaches as well as in objects, from classical film masterpieces to early film or "pre-cinema" (and/or "post-cinema") apparatus, and from the dark screening room to the vast array of screens populating today's world. Film or cinema historians have moved away from linear narratives to favor accounts of complex cultural circulations. Media archaeologists have turned to forgotten, obsolete machineries, to understand the dynamic balance of media evolution, and to replace the diversity of contemporary viewing devices within long or very long histories where they could be confronted and tested against intricate genealogies of real or imaginary objects.

These methods, set against traditional film history, vastly enriched and complexified our view of the history of cinema. But still, certain aspects of that evolution of media or "dispositives" remain difficult to account for. Other disciplines know similar difficulties, like the history of science or of technology: how can we explain the newness of a certain discovery or invention, without reducing this newness either to the genius of the great men on the one hand, or to the simple and unproblematic continuity of history? Media archeology has tended to isolate apparatuses and objects from one another, but some historical moments have remained reluctant to that dispersion into fragments. Some tension seems to be at work at certain points in history, a tension which is concretely productive for the people involved. What I would propose here, using the conceptual tools proposed by the French tradition of historical epistemology, is to decenter the analysis from objects to problems. Problems are in fact what inventors, technicians, engineers, and users deal with; they are intrinsically historical and operative. They point toward an imagined solution – in a sense, they carry an intrinsic teleology. That solution may be utopian, impossible, or only a small transformation of a difficult or painful technique. It may be consciously and precisely formulated by the operator, or remain only a vague project. In any case, it embodies the orientation of historical evolution at that precise moment.

Let us take an example. At some point in the 19th century, a young man, 26 years old, has an idea. He imagines a machine capable of wonderful things:

Au moyen de mon appareil, je me fais fort, notamment, de reproduire le défilé d'un cortège, une revue et des manœuvres militaires, les péripéties d'une bataille, une fête publique, une scène théâtrale, les évolutions et les danses d'une ou de plusieurs personnes, les jeux de physionomie et, si l'on veut, les grimaces d'une tête humaine, etc. ; une scène maritime, le mouvement des vagues (mascaret), la course des nuages dans un ciel orageux, particulièrement en pays de montagnes, l'éruption d'un volcan, etc. etc. ; le tableau qui se déroule aux yeux d'un observateur circulant dans une ville, dans un monument ou dans un pays intéressant.¹

That list is in fact not very surprising. We – film historians – know these scenes, we have seen them already. In fact, these lines are surprisingly unsurprising, if I may phrase it that way. What makes them quite astonishing is that they belong to a French patent application filed on the first of March 1864, some 25 years before anyone would get seriously close to realizing what this young man, Louis Ducos du Hauron, claimed he could do. That makes for a quite serious historical problem.

In fact, that text, describing the potential applications of the protected idea, an "apparatus aimed at photographically reproducing a scene of any kind, with all the transformations it underwent during a determined time,"² has been one of the most highly praised of its kind in the (French) historiography of "pre-cinema" – which itself could be described as "pre-media archaeology." For Georges Sadoul in 1946, these sentences were a "prophecy" of an "amazing precision [...] forty years ahead,"³ and still in 1994, Laurent Mannoni devoted five laudatory pages of his *Great Art of Light and Shadow* to the one who appears as "certainly the most original and the most inventive of those who wanted to capture life with the means of photography between 1850 and 1870."⁴ These praises are in fact a way for the historian to solve his problem: the apparent gap between what this text says and the moment when it was written. A gap to which belong Eadweard Muybridge, Etienne-Jules Marey, and quite a few others. The historiographical solution here is genius or prophecy – a not very satisfying solution, as it doesn't help us much to understand the historical situation.

The other way around this problem could look better at first sight: it would consist in constructing the "Ducos du Hauron" event as an entirely autonomous incident, with no relation whatsoever to what would, much later, be known as "the cinema," or as "motion pictures" considered as an industrial, commercial, cultural enterprise. That disconnection would be more satisfying from a methodological point of view, given the current state of "cinema history" or "media archaeology" as disciplines. But would that give an entirely convincing account of what we cannot avoid: the amazing similarity between that list of applications imagined by Ducos in 1864 and a Pathé catalogue of 1899, or a Kinemacolor catalogue of 1912?

Beside these historiographical ruminations, the historian facing this 1864 patent tends to get assailed by a more urgent historical question: but how? How did Ducos imagine he could do the "trick" he had in mind at that time? The machines he proposes are not less astounding than the list of potential applications, but for almost opposite reasons. From what we can gather of the patent's descriptions and illustrations, the apparatus aimed at obtaining the prints is a rather big wooden dark chamber equipped with no less than two hundred and ninety lenses arranged in staggered rows. Between the lenses and the glass plate receiving the images, two moving pieces of black cloth are synchronized: the first is very long, in continuous, motor-driven motion, and bears two hundred and ninety holes, placed in a regular descending zigzag; the second is shorter, in intermittent, hand-crank-driven motion, and bears a single rectangular hole, as wide as the dark chamber and high as two rows of lenses.

The historian suddenly feels more at ease. Of course, one can see that this 1864 device was not working, was bound not to work – even though Ducos claims to have built one, and draws consequences out of its qualities

and defects. We can see that it could not work because we now know that the "right" direction, that the "good" apparatus, were single-lens devices. So two hundred and ninety lenses "of small size and equal focus" is simply delirious. This was an obvious step in the wrong direction, and the delay between this patent and Wordsworth Donisthorpe's 1889 Kinesigraph recovers its coherence for the historian, who can now quietly move to more serious objects: those that went in the "right" direction.

In fact, contemplating this apparatus now, it is quite hard to imagine how such a complex, fragile, difficult to handle machinery can have appeared as the way to go, be it to an imaginative young man, the year when Jules Verne's *Voyage au centre de la terre* was first published. Or rather, to phrase it in a less psychological and more historical way, it is hard to remember a time when this could appear as the right way to achieve the now familiar results carefully listed by Ducos. What I would like to argue here, is that remembering that time is in fact a crucial historical task to understand the epistemological status of movement and images before the invention of the "motion pictures." And that an exotic machinery like Ducos's is a helpful object for this task precisely because of its eccentricity regarding the "good" direction of the technological history of "cinema." The question that remains is a methodological one: how are we to apprehend this object in a way that we can take into account at the same time the striking similarities between Ducos's list of applications and a catalogue of early film views, and the striking differences between Ducos's machine and, say, a Robert William Paul 1896 Theatrograph?

In the Western organization of industry and intellectual property, what a patent describes is an *invention*. An invention has to be new, which the patent should demonstrate and illustrate to be admissible. But an invention has more precise characteristics. In the definition proposed by the philosopher of technology Gilbert Simondon, an invention is "the resolution of a problem."⁵ That quite simple definition designates in fact a complex, collective historical evolution. To Simondon, it requires that a problem preexist the moment of invention itself, a problem that is given a certain form in each stage of the evolution. The history of technology can then be understood not as the history of (revolutionary) ideas, but as a history of problems.

In fact, one of Gaston Bachelard's first works, his 1927 supplementary thesis, was, as George Canguilhem later described it, "a study in history of science, but in a truly new sense."⁶ Its newness was precisely to consider the history of a particular *problem*: the propagation of heat in solids. The first sentences already formulated a strong hypothesis:

On croit aisément que les problèmes scientifiques se succèdent historiquement par ordre de complexité croissante, sans qu'on fasse toujours effort pour se replacer par la pensée devant le problème tel qu'il s'offre à l'observation primitive et sans définir à quel égard on tient un problème pour complexe. On oublie que la solution trouvée réfléchit sa clarté sur les données, apporte des schémas qui simplifient et dirigent l'expérience et que la solution partielle se coordonne à un système général où elle puise une force supplémentaire.⁷

In fact, one does not go from simple problems which, once solved, would allow to move to more complex problems. A new problem is at first always complicated, because the "right" tools, the "right" experiments and the "right" concepts that would solve it are not yet known. Bachelard's very beautiful idea is that "the formulation of a problem cannot be held clear and consequently simple as long as the problem is not solved."⁸ We are only able to really understand a problem after its solution has been found. Therefore problems don't move from simple to complex, but from complex to simple, attaining the state of simplicity – meaning clear position – only at the moment of resolution. Interestingly, that is strikingly close to Gilbert Simondon's description of the evolution of technical objects from primitively complicated – what he calls "abstract" – to finally simple – what he names "concrete."⁹ For Simondon, the final "concrete" version of the technical object is simple in the sense

that all the requirements and internal interactions of the object are now understood: no parts are useless or self-destructive – or almost none. The object will keep evolving, but in other directions. Thus, problems as technical objects are caught in historical processes of *simplification*, linked with the progressive understanding of their inner logic, processes in which the inventions appear as the partial or general solutions to a certain problem that cannot always be clearly formulated, but that nonetheless underlies and orientates the research.

And there come the historiographical difficulties or paradox: the history of a problem can't be done before it appears as solved, but at the same time, as Bachelard says, "the found solution reflects its clarity on the data" and it becomes very difficult to understand how complex it had appeared to the "primitive observation." The history of problems furthermore involves dealing with stages of the reflection on a certain object when concepts are only partially formulated or overlap one another, when phenomena are not clearly distinguished or their causality not seen, when the vocabulary is still loose or moving... But those early stages of a problem or of a technical object which is supposed to solve it are in turn interesting in that they are particularly revealing of the epistemological background in which the problem was first apprehended: the circulation of concepts and models or patterns can give us an idea of the network to which the object was first believed to pertain.

What Ducos du Hauron's patent can show us, is in fact how complicated the problem really was, a complexity that we have forgotten now that the solution or solutions are so familiar to us.

To grasp the coherence of Ducos's machine, it is necessary to remind us first of the technological environment he was working in. To him, photography used glass plates, possibly paper, through the collodion process. The silver bromides processes, which would allow for "instantaneous photography" in the sense that would later become dominant, didn't appear before the late 1870s. But Ducos needed some sort of instantaneity, as he explained in the first lines of the patent:

*Mon procédé consiste à substituer rapidement et sans confusion, aux yeux, non pas seulement d'un seul individu, mais, si l'on veut, de toute une assemblée, les images amplifiées d'un grand nombre d'épreuves instantanées obtenues successivement à des intervalles très-rapprochés.*¹⁰

Again, these 1864 sentences cannot but produce some kind of puzzlement, due to both the similarities *and* the differences between these formulations and the later ones we know so well – instantaneity and short intervals are there, but substitution is not *exactly* movement, and "amplified" images are not *exactly* projected images... or are they? To obtain the desired arrangement given the historical circumstances is Ducos's technical *problem*. In glass plate photography, one plate bears one image. This may suggest that a large number of prints implies a large number of plates. In fact, Ducos adopted the other, symmetrical principle: he would use only one plate for *the whole scene*. The large number of prints – not really images, rather "instantaneous prints" – are a series of small pictures exposed successively on a rather large plate. The plate thus remains still. As a consequence, many pictures will require as many lenses. The text of the patent doesn't present any figure, but the illustrations give a better idea of what Ducos concretely had in mind. They show that wooden "dark chamber" already described, set with twenty rows of alternatively fourteen and fifteen lenses, which makes for two hundred and ninety lenses "of small dimensions and equal focus."

But in return, Ducos's choice of having only one plate for the whole series implies that he considered the "images" produced by his apparatus to be not the small instantaneous prints, but the "photographic reproduction" of the *entire scene*. In fact, that is absolutely coherent with the vocabulary used by Ducos in the patent. He never used the word "images" for the basic elemental "prints," and when he described the outcome of his device, he claimed that: "[O]n ne croira voir qu'une seule image immobile, dans laquelle tous les changements graduels de forme et de position des objets s'effectueront comme dans la nature."¹¹ The result is thus *one single*

image. More: it is *one single still image*, which will include all the changes in form and position affecting objects during the time of the scene. Strikingly, the concept of *movement* is almost entirely absent from Ducos's patent: what he wants to record and reproduce are *transformations*, or *changes* – movements are a side effect, neither a crucial concept nor a crucial result, not at the center of the *problem*. That is, I would argue, one of the main, major differences between the attempts at a solution of that problem of moving photographic images that occurred before 1870 and the attempts that would happen later, from the end of the 1880s. In a little less than twenty years, the status of the concept of movement in culture, art, science, etc. has entirely changed.

Once Ducos had decided that all the small photographs would be printed on one single plate, he had to organize the succession of the exposures. At that time, mechanical shutters hadn't been introduced in photography: exposure time was regulated by the photographer removing the lens's cap and counting seconds. But this solution was of course not compatible with Ducos's project. He had to imagine a system that would produce the opening of each lens once at a precise moment, in a precise order, and for a precise duration – and he had to imagine this with no model of "shutter" in mind. Ducos's idea was to use a continuously moving strip of black cloth, perforated so that each hole uncovers the right lens at the right time – a strip he had to supplement with another so that lenses were not uncovered several times when they should be only once. The model there could have been street organ cards, continuous strips perforated to organize the duration of notes.

Ducos's apparatus thus appears as a combination of a still transparent photographic plate, numerous still lenses, and a moving strip of opaque perforated cloth. Some of the basic elements of later devices are here, but in almost unrecognizable forms and functions. And some elements that we now think crucial to the "cinema" conceptual network – like intermittence or even perhaps movement – are lacking.

The machine for the reproduction of the scene is based on the same model, but with quite important variations. First, the lenses are not parallel anymore: they have to be made to converge exactly on the screen, a "quite simple operation" according to Ducos, of setting them manually one by one by trial and error. But most of all, the system of cloth strips is abandoned. The rapid succession of images on the screen is realized by the physical movement of the body of the operator, holding a light in his hand and moving it in the precise, predetermined path behind the machine that corresponds to the succession of exposures, a path that had been calculated so as to allow the minimal lapse between successive illuminations of the screen... Complicated though the operator's light-dance may be, Ducos never proposed any mechanization of the operation, as if *this* movement had to remain in the realm of the bodily and the subjective.

It is to be noted that Ducos was aware that a multi-lens device implies variations of point of view on the reproduced scene. But to him, this was only a minor drawback:

*L'effet réel [de l'appareil] sera celui qui se serait produit aux yeux du spectateur, si ce dernier avait observé la scène naturelle en donnant à son corps un léger balancement ayant pour amplitude la longueur d'une rangée d'objectifs. Mais ce balancement, comme on peut s'en convaincre soi-même, n'a aucune importance et ne gêne nullement la vision [...]*¹²

We are here quite far from the passive spectator, forced to stand still in his seat...

Ducos du Hauron's complicated device is a typically "abstract" machine in the sense of Gilbert Simondon. It dates from the early stages of a certain problem, when the networks of tasks and concepts, their hierarchies and interrelations, are not clearly known. What the machine embodies, is Ducos's partial solution to his specific formulation of the problem, a solution highly dependent – and in turn revealing – of the epistemological system he was working in. But in Bachelard and Simondon's view, this internal coherence and specificity of the machine as historical object doesn't prevent it from belonging to the wider, collective history of a certain problem. Naming that general problem "cinema" is probably inevitable. It has the advantage of allowing us to

understand the deep connections between Ducos's claims and the later film catalogues, connections that show how a cultural imagery of movement was already in place in the middle of the 19th century, with its recurring *topoi*. This does not imply the construction of a linear, teleological history. For sure, Ducos's conception of what he was doing and of the right way to do it is radically different from Louis Lumière's. They don't share any precise *ideas* of their invention; what they share is some general *problem*, whose precise formulation has known several deeply different moments. The question then is: where are the discontinuities to be placed in that history?

Reacting against previous forms of media histories perceived as too linear and too concerned with the present state of the cinematic apparatus, media archaeology has tended to create systematic discontinuities between objects. This allowed to account for the diversity of past models without judging them according to their supposed contribution to the privileged history of our own model. But in turn, this method runs the risk of producing a dispersed history blurring discontinuities themselves. In a complementary fashion, a history of problems tries to relocate the breaks and to test their importance. These fractures are established at the epistemological level, involving concepts and practices. They do not imply any ontological definition of the media at stake; rather, they draw lines of tension within the transformations of objects. The operation could be described as a mathematical derivative on the flux of history: the search for tangents allows us to discover the turning-up points or cusps in a given cultural transformation. Getting back to today's situation, an epistemological analysis of "digital cinema" technologies could be formulated: what are the problems that "digital cinema" is supposed to solve? Are they the same general problem as the "cinema" problem used to be? Or are they somehow entirely new problems? That history remains to be done.

Notes

¹ Louis Ducos du Hauron, French Patent no. 91976, 1 March 1864, pp. 14-15.

² *Idem*, p. 1.

³ Georges Sadoul, *Histoire générale du cinéma*, vol. 1, Denoël, Paris 1946, p. 36.

⁴ Laurent Mannoni, *Le Grand Art de la lumière et de l'ombre. Archéologie du cinéma*, Nathan, Paris 1994, pp. 242-246.

⁵ Gilbert Simondon, *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* [1958], Aubier, Paris 1989, for instance pp. 102-103, 170-171, etc., and *Id.*, *L'Invention dans les techniques. Cours et conférences* [1968-1974], Seuil, Paris 2005.

⁶ Georges Canguilhem, "L'Histoire des sciences dans l'œuvre épistémologique de Gaston Bachelard" [1963], in *Id.*, *Études d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences concernant les vivants et la vie*, Vrin, Paris 1994, p. 174.

⁷ *Id.*, *Étude sur l'évolution d'un problème de physique. La propagation thermique dans les solides*, Vrin, Paris 1927, p. 7.

⁸ *Idem*, p. 88.

⁹ Gilbert Simondon, *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques*, cit., p. 34.

¹⁰ Louis Ducos du Hauron, French Patent no. 91976, cit., p. 2.

¹¹ *Idem*, p. 17.

¹² Louis Ducos du Hauron, French Patent no. 91976, cit., p. 8.

L'Histoire de la théorie du cinéma n'existe pas. Un cas d'espèce : comprendre Bazin

Bien entendu, nous le savons tous, l'histoire de la théorie du cinéma existe.

Le titre de cette communication doit donc être lu avant tout comme un clin d'œil au texte de Jacques Aumont, « L'Histoire du cinéma n'existe pas », ¹ véritable invitation, faite aux historiens, à réfléchir aux fondements épistémologiques de leur domaine, à la méthodologie qu'ils mettent en œuvre : ce texte a d'ailleurs été publié dans un numéro de la revue *CINÉMAS* consacré aux procédures historiographiques en cinéma.

S'il est donc peut-être excessif de dire que l'histoire de la théorie du cinéma n'existe pas, du moins peut-on éventuellement s'accorder à reconnaître que son existence paraît dispersée, éparse et finalement un peu problématique. En effet, ce serait une pratique – citons par exemple un numéro de *CinémAction*, ² le travail de Francesco Casetti, ³ etc. – mais sans reconnaissance académique, puisque l'on peut observer déjà que quelques-uns des livres les plus connus et les plus importants en matière de réflexion historiographique (*Faire l'histoire du cinéma* d'Allen et Gomery, ⁴ *De l'histoire du cinéma* de Lagny ⁵) ne la mentionnent pas aux côtés des autres approches de l'histoire du cinéma, esthétique, sociale, économique et technique. Seul Francesco Casetti évoque très vite, en conclusion de la partie qu'il consacre à l'histoire, la possibilité d'une histoire des théories, mais sans donner de réels développements. ⁶ Cette absence de reconnaissance académique en fait donc un domaine de recherche sans véritable cadre méthodologique, sans principes épistémologiques largement débattus, sans réel consensus quant à sa nature même.

Il faut donc entendre, derrière ce titre provocateur, le désir de débattre de ces questions épistémologiques, de proposer quelques pistes qui puissent satisfaire tout à la fois l'histoire et la théorie. Et s'il m'a semblé logique de le faire à partir du cas Bazin, c'est parce qu'à bien des égards il s'agit d'un cas un peu limite, qui permet, peut-être mieux que d'autres, de poser certains problèmes propres à l'histoire de la théorie du cinéma.

Précisons enfin que la référence au texte de Jacques Aumont ne constitue pas qu'un clin d'œil. Il me semble en effet que la méthodologie mise en place par Aumont dans ce texte, qui consiste à interroger le syntagme « his-

toire du cinéma » en soupesant séparément chacun des termes qui le constituent, peut être reprise avec profit lorsqu'il s'agit de questionner la notion d'histoire de la théorie.

L'hypothétique problème de l'histoire de la théorie du cinéma peut venir en premier lieu de la notion de théorie. Bien sûr, il faudrait peut-être même commencer encore en amont, en interrogeant la distinction possible entre « théorie du film » et « théorie du cinéma ». Mais puisque pendant longtemps, disons un peu arbitrairement jusqu'à ce que le cinéma soit envisagé au plan académique en tant que média ou en tant que dispositif, « théorie du film » et « théorie du cinéma » ont paru se confondre, je laisse cette distinction de côté.

Il me semble que la notion de « théorie » appliquée au cinéma et envisagée comme pouvant être objet d'histoire pose pour l'essentiel deux problèmes : le premier problème tient apparemment à la nature essentiellement « textuelle » de la théorie. Certes, on peut se demander avec Jacques Aumont si un film ne peut pas être un acte de théorie,⁷ mais il n'en reste pas moins que la théorie constitue le plus souvent une sorte de genre littéraire (comme Kracauer le dit pour l'histoire⁸). Dès lors, toute histoire de la théorie du cinéma envisagée sous cet angle s'expose aux mêmes problèmes que l'histoire de la littérature, et en particulier à sa dimension parfois fort peu « historienne ». Ainsi, pour Gérard Genette, « en littérature, l'objet historique, [...] ce n'est pas l'œuvre : ce sont des éléments transcendants aux œuvres et constitutifs du jeu littéraire que l'on appellera pour aller vite les *formes* : par exemple, les codes rhétoriques, les techniques narratives, les structures poétiques, etc. ».⁹ L'histoire de la littérature consisterait donc à analyser la circulation, la reprise, de texte en texte, de codes rhétoriques, de techniques narratives, de structures poétiques, etc. Ce qui relève de part en part des études littéraires et non de la méthodologie historique.

Or cette tendance de l'histoire de la littérature paraît continuer à servir de modèle à une certaine histoire de la théorie du cinéma, attentive, par exemple, à la reprise ou à la reformulation de certains syntagmes d'un auteur à l'autre, à la mise en valeur d'une forme de poétique, propre à tel ou tel théoricien étudié, dans l'appropriation de certains codes. Remarquons néanmoins que l'histoire de la littérature telle qu'envisagée par Genette se fait en deçà ou au-delà de l'auteur, alors que la tendance de l'histoire de la théorie du cinéma que j'évoque n'en est pas encore à se débarrasser de l'auteur, du théoricien. On trouve de nombreux exemples de cette conception de l'histoire de la théorie, jusque dans des publications très récentes. Ainsi Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, dans son dernier ouvrage,¹⁰ propose pour l'essentiel un commentaire nouveau de l'œuvre de Bazin, mais la dimension historique n'y est pourtant pas absente.¹¹ Cependant, pour l'essentiel, cette dimension historique se limite à l'étude de la circulation et de la transformation de certaines formules, de Malraux à Bazin, de Bazin à Barthes, etc. *Comprendre Bazin*, pour Joubert-Laurencin, c'est comprendre la place qu'occupent ses textes dans une lignée en quelque sorte autoconstituée (par exemple Malraux, Bazin, Barthes) et c'est comprendre la place qu'occupent les textes des théoriciens antérieurs dans ceux de Bazin. L'horizon de cette compréhension est toujours textuel. De fait, ni le matériau ni la méthode de ce type d'études ne relèvent au sens strict de la démarche historique. Notons néanmoins que considérer la théorie avant tout au plan textuel n'exclut pas toute possibilité d'en faire réellement l'histoire. Il est possible, nous le savons tous, d'établir la genèse d'un texte théorique, comme de tout texte d'ailleurs, laquelle peut éclairer la méthodologie mise en œuvre par ce texte théorique, mais il est aussi possible d'étudier sa circulation. Il y a eu, ces dernières années, beaucoup d'excellentes recherches de cette nature, par exemple autour des publications de Kracauer (pensons notamment aux travaux de Leonardo Quaresima).¹²

Le problème tient donc finalement moins à la nature « textuelle » de la théorie qu'aux questions que l'on pose aux textes. Dès lors qu'on interroge leurs conditions matérielles d'existence, on se situe nécessairement du côté de la diachronie et donc de l'histoire ; si l'on interroge la manière dont tel théoricien a lu tel autre et s'y réfère, on se place finalement dans une sorte d'addition de synchronies (le présent éternel de chaque ouvrage) et on s'inscrit ainsi en dehors de toute considération historique.

Le deuxième problème lié à la notion de théorie appliquée au cinéma et envisagée comme pouvant être objet d'histoire tient à la définition même de cette notion de théorie. On se souvient sans doute que Pierre Sorlin a défendu l'idée que « la théorie du cinéma n'existe probablement pas ».¹³ Cette position quelque peu polémique ne tient pas qu'à l'extradisciplinarité de Sorlin, plutôt du côté de la sociologie et de l'histoire du cinéma, puisqu'elle est assez proche de celle de certains théoriciens. Aumont concède ainsi que la notion de théorie « n'est pas très facile à définir »,¹⁴ ce qui peut contribuer à expliquer que, dans l'entrée « théorie », dont il est très probablement l'auteur, du *Dictionnaire théorique et critique du cinéma*, il range Deleuze parmi les théoriciens,¹⁵ alors que Jean-Louis Leutrat et Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues, après avoir précisé qu'« il ne faut pas confondre théorie d'un domaine et philosophie », voient en Deleuze l'auteur d'« un raid philosophique et non [d'] une théorie du cinéma ».¹⁶ Et il faudrait ajouter à ces positions contrastées que Aumont lui-même a prôné l'inverse, arguant que l'ouvrage de Deleuze « se refuse à être un livre de théorie ».¹⁷ Alors, Deleuze, théoricien du cinéma, ou non ? Tout dépend bien sûr de la définition de la théorie du cinéma qu'on adopte.

Cette difficulté à définir la théorie du cinéma – difficulté qui pourrait expliquer en partie l'impossibilité d'en faire l'histoire, car comment faire l'histoire de ce que qu'on ne peut définir, de ce sur quoi on ne s'accorde pas quant à la définition ? – est perceptible jusque dans l'introduction du livre de Francesco Casetti, *Les Théories du cinéma depuis 1945*, qui prend la précaution de donner plusieurs définitions de la notion de théorie, notamment aux plans intellectuel et social. L'une d'elles m'intéresse particulièrement :

[...] une thèse acquiert une dimension théorique si, au-delà de la manifestation d'un savoir, elle apparaît aussi comme un patrimoine commun ; c'est-à-dire si elle se présente comme un ensemble de connaissances qui guident la recherche, relient les observations de chacun, synthétisent une intuition diffuse, incarnent des « points de vue collectifs », etc. Pour être considérée comme telle, une théorie doit servir à la fois de point de rencontre et de motif de discussion. Elle doit être reconnue et prise en charge par un groupe plus ou moins restreint de chercheurs : c'est seulement ainsi qu'elle devient un modèle explicatif et interprétatif d'un phénomène.¹⁸

Il n'y aurait donc de théorie que dans le produit d'un double processus : un processus qui institue la réflexion en *savoir*, par sa capacité à prendre en compte des débats sur un sujet ; puis un processus qui institue la réflexion en *patrimoine commun*, par son caractère d'acceptabilité, lequel la transforme en élément de référence et en outil pour ceux qui viennent après, bref l'instaure pleinement en théorie. Cette définition de la nature sociale de la théorie, que Casetti ne déconnecte évidemment pas de sa dimension intellectuelle, scientifique, en fait nécessairement un processus historique, donc potentiellement sujet d'histoire.

En un sens, si l'on suit Casetti, l'histoire pourrait même être un moyen de définir si telle ou telle pensée du cinéma a été ou non instituée en théorie. Pour le dire encore autrement, un travail de recherche historique visant à montrer comment telle contribution a répondu, en son temps, à des réflexions sur le cinéma propres à son époque, puis visant à analyser dans quelles conditions cette contribution a fini par être perçue par certains comme une proposition théorique féconde et pertinente – ce travail historique permettrait de lever l'éventuelle ambiguïté quant à la nature profonde de telle ou telle réflexion prétendument théorique.

Il me semble que la communauté des chercheurs n'a pas encore pris pleinement la mesure de la force heuristique de cette proposition, véritable programme de recherche resté globalement lettre morte. Bazin, bien que largement étudié et commenté, n'en a pas plus bénéficié que les autres. La preuve en est qu'aujourd'hui encore, à l'orée de toute recherche sur Bazin, on se questionne sur son statut, entre critique et théorie,¹⁹ faute d'avoir réglé cette question par l'étude du double processus suggéré par Casetti. Il est vrai que la responsabilité en incombe partiellement à Bazin lui-même, qui est demeuré jusqu'au bout relativement ambigu quant à l'ambition de ses réflexions : s'agissait-il de considérations critiques ou d'une réelle entreprise théorique ? En 1955,

dans une lettre à Aristarco publié dans *Cinema Nuovo*, le critique français écrit ne pouvoir prétendre à opposer à celle d'Aristarco une « théorie cohérente ».²⁰ Quelques années plus tard, préfaçant son grand œuvre, le tome 1 de *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ?*, Bazin reprend cette posture consistant à minorer la portée de ses propositions :

*Nous partirons, comme il se doit, de l'image photographique, élément primitif de la synthèse finale, pour en arriver à esquisser, sinon une théorie du langage cinématographique fondée sur l'hypothèse de son réalisme ontogénétique, du moins une analyse qui ne lui soit point contradictoire.*²¹

On est frappé, dans les deux cas, par l'ambiguïté sans doute volontaire des deux formulations. En un sens, on peut y discerner, à chaque fois, simultanément le désir d'être lu comme un théoricien et la crainte de ne pas être perçu comme un vrai théoricien, la peur de ne pas être à la hauteur de l'image que Bazin se fait de la théorie. Cette sorte de précaution rhétorique peut expliquer partiellement qu'on s'en soit tenu à cet entre-deux, que plusieurs formules utilisées par Hervé Joubert-Laurencin illustrent parfaitement : il voit en effet en Bazin un « théoricien non déclaré »²² et dans sa production une « théorie invisible »,²³ avant d'évoquer au sujet de la première édition de *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ?* un « exposé en quatre volumes de sa théorie ».²⁴ La contradiction n'est qu'apparente et même sans doute délibérée. Car l'édition de ces quatre tomes a indéniablement contribué à donner à Bazin sa stature de théoricien. Le numéro que les *Cahiers du Cinéma* lui consacrent, au moment de son décès, en témoigne : Leenhardt voit en lui un « théoricien du cinéma »,²⁵ tandis que Rohmer, dans un long compte rendu du premier tome de *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ?*, s'attache à montrer la place singulière que Bazin occupe au sein de la théorie du cinéma, minorant logiquement la dimension proprement critique des textes de Bazin :

*Rien qui porte la trace, ici, des contingences du métier de journaliste [...]. Ces textes, tous suscités par une circonstance précise, faisaient en même temps partie du développement d'un plan méthodique, lequel nous est maintenant révélé.*²⁶

Bref, la disparition de Bazin, en même temps que l'édition du premier tome, lui octroie une aura nouvelle, celle de théoricien, mais une aura de théoricien en quelque sorte arrachée à son statut initial de critique, c'est-à-dire d'écrivain de cinéma attaché avant tout à réagir à des événements présents (des films, des festivals, etc.). Cependant, ce que l'on a assez peu noté jusqu'ici, faute d'avoir fait pleinement l'histoire de la théorie bazinienne, c'est combien l'édition du premier tome de *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ?* participe d'une tentative d'auto-légitimation de Bazin en théoricien : par et pour l'édition, Bazin déleste ses textes d'une partie de leur poids critique, et l'assume pleinement dans son avant-propos. Il y insiste en effet sur le choix de conserver des « articles moins directement déterminés par les contingences de l'actualité journalistique »²⁷ (on remarquera au passage que Rohmer reprend explicitement la rhétorique du maître), choix opéré au sein « de la masse de feuillets noircis au jour le jour, [dont] nombre ne sont plus bons qu'à allumer le feu ; d'autres, qui avaient en leur temps une petite valeur en référence à l'état du cinéma contemporain, n'auraient plus guère aujourd'hui que celle d'un intérêt rétrospectif ».²⁸ À ce choix au sein de tous les textes écrits, dans le but de conserver ceux qui sont le moins liés à un contexte précis, à une actualité, bref ceux dont le coefficient de « théoricité » était, dès l'écriture, le plus fort, s'ajoute le parti de la réécriture : « nous n'avons jamais hésité naturellement à les corriger, soit dans la forme soit dans le fond, chaque fois que cela nous a paru utile ».²⁹

Or les travaux philologiques en cours, menés notamment par Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, permettent de mesurer l'ampleur considérable de cette réécriture, dont il faut remarquer qu'elle vise presque systématiquement les parties les plus théoriques des textes afin de les préciser – par exemple la conclusion de *Ontologie de l'image photographique*, totalement reprise (ce cas est longuement analysé par Joubert-Laurencin dans son dernier

livre)³⁰ – ou qu'elle repose sur la suppression des parties proprement critiques d'un texte, de tout ce qui se réfère à un *hic* et à un *nunc*, pour le transformer *de facto* en réflexion générale. C'est le cas par exemple de « Vie et mort de la surimpression »,³¹ vidé de tout ce qui a trait au courant « fantastique » du cinéma français pendant et au sortir de la guerre, courant avec lequel Bazin compare le cinéma américain fantastique qui arrive en France et qui utilise de nouvelles techniques, plus « réalistes ». Si la version *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ?* de ce texte conserve encore un léger poids critique (la référence à trois films américains du moment, emblématiques de l'usage de nouveaux trucages), l'article finit par disparaître totalement de la version dite « définitive » (en un seul tome) de *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ?*,³² accentuant encore la portée théorique du volume.

Bazin ne dissimule donc nullement le fait qu'avec le tome 1 de *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ?* il transforme son activité de critique en production autre, qu'il n'ose définir comme totalement théorique. Mais, en dépit de l'avertissement de Bazin, se construit immédiatement une fiction, dont Rohmer est le premier maître d'œuvre avec son compte rendu : celle de Bazin immédiatement théoricien, toujours théoricien, théoricien dès ses débuts, bref celle de Bazin « tel qu'en lui même l'éternité le change » (pour reprendre la phrase de Mallarmé si souvent pastichée par Bazin). Fiction qui s'édifie sur une contre-vérité répétée deux fois par Rohmer, qui évoque « les différents articles retenus, le plus souvent non retouchés »,³³ puis les textes auxquels « il n'a apporté absolument aucune retouche quant au fond ».³⁴ Bref, la théorie bazinienne, vue par Rohmer, ne relèverait donc pas d'un processus, partant de textes critiques remaniés et progressivement reconnus comme contribution théorique : elle serait en quelque sorte un donné, donc un élément soustrait à l'histoire.

Peut-être faut-il voir là l'origine d'un phénomène qui court jusqu'aujourd'hui, et dont témoigne par exemple l'ouvrage collectif récent *Opening Bazin*,³⁵ malgré l'ambition affichée de retourner à toute la production bazinienne : le phénomène du rejet dans l'ombre de « la masse des feuillets noircis » (pour reprendre l'expression de Bazin) et du refus de lire cette multitude d'articles écrits par Bazin en parallèle aux innombrables textes de l'époque avec lesquels Bazin dialogue. Comment *comprendre* pleinement Bazin si nous ne le lisons pas pour ce qu'il est aussi (et peut-être avant tout ?), à savoir un formidable commentateur de son temps, un incessant débateur, témoin en creux à la fois du cinéma et de la pensée du cinéma de son époque. Il faudrait enfin se demander si cette édification de Bazin en théoricien, construite sur l'effacement de son travail critique (et de la globalité de son activité), ne relève pas, au moins partiellement d'une forme de contresens. Il s'agit en effet ni plus ni moins que d'occulter, au profit de la défense d'une méthode prétendument inductive, le mouvement qui traverse toute l'écriture bazinienne et qui met au cœur de son processus de réflexion la pratique critique. Chez Bazin, l'ontologie sert à concevoir une forme d'entéléchie, la forme parfaite vers laquelle doit tendre le cinéma – et tout ce mouvement de l'ontologie à l'entéléchie repose sur la dynamique critique.

Après ces premiers développements autour de Bazin, on voit donc que, quels que soient les problèmes posés par la notion de théorie (problèmes liés à sa nature textuelle et à son caractère difficilement définissable), cette notion non seulement s'offre aisément à toute tentative historiographique mais paraît même l'appeler. Par conséquent, si l'histoire de la théorie du cinéma n'existe pas, le problème ne vient donc peut-être pas de la théorie.

Il faut alors convenir que le soupçon devrait plutôt porter sur l'histoire et se demander, à l'instar de Jacques Aumont dans son texte sur l'histoire du cinéma, le problème ne vient pas des historiens, qui n'ont pas été assez bons... ou peut-être aussi n'ont-ils tout simplement pas assez occupé le terrain de l'histoire de la théorie du cinéma, au profit des théoriciens, qui, logiquement, ont contribué à cette histoire de la théorie en opérant, à partir des textes antérieurs, une sorte de re-théorisation. Bazin, comme d'autres, est ainsi le prétexte à de nouveaux commentaires, qui pourraient se passer de lui, mais trouvent avec lui une sorte d'assise légitimante. Le modèle de cette pratique n'est sans doute pas que la tendance « Genette » de l'histoire littéraire, prompt à se débarrasser des auteurs. L'idée d'associer histoire et nouveau commentaire d'un théoricien célèbre vient peut-être aussi d'une source d'inspiration en quelque sorte évidente en France, parce qu'omniprésente dans le

champ de la pensée sur le cinéma : Gilles Deleuze. Sa conception de l'histoire de la philosophie est bien connue, d'autant qu'au-delà de ses ouvrages, elle a été en quelque sorte socialisée, presque vulgarisée, par l'entrée qui lui est consacrée dans son célèbre *Abécédaire*.³⁶

L'histoire de la philosophie selon Deleuze relève pour l'essentiel du portrait de philosophes, auquel il s'est lui-même adonné avec Spinoza. Il précise ainsi dans son *Abécédaire* : « avant de conquérir la couleur philosophique, et la couleur philosophique c'est le concept, avant de savoir ou d'arriver à inventer des concepts, il faut un tel travail. Et je crois que l'histoire de la philosophie, c'est cette lente modestie : il faut faire longtemps des portraits ». ³⁷ Bref, faire l'histoire de la philosophie c'est s'efforcer de penser les idées d'un autre, avant de penser à travers les idées d'un autre : l'histoire de la philosophie est donc l'antichambre de la philosophie, le travail préparatoire nécessaire à toute philosophie.

Sans présager d'une influence déterminante de Deleuze et de sa position, il est indéniable que nombre de chercheurs, notamment français (mais pas seulement), intéressés par la théorie et son histoire ont agi selon ce principe. Les recherches de Dudley Andrew l'illustrent parfaitement puisque débutant par un « portrait mental, un portrait spirituel » de Bazin³⁸ (j'utilise à dessein les formules de Deleuze dans son *Abécédaire*) avant qu'Andrew en vienne à proposer ensuite ses propres développements théoriques, dans divers ouvrages, mais presque toujours à partir de ses réflexions sur Bazin, comme le montre par exemple *What Cinema Is*.³⁹

Mais on oublie trop souvent que ce n'est là que la moitié du programme « histoire de la philosophie » tel qu'envisagé par Deleuze. En effet, l'histoire de la philosophie, explique-t-il, n'a pas que vocation à analyser les concepts créés par les philosophes du passé :

*En philosophie, il y a les deux à la fois : la création d'un concept, et la création d'un concept se fait toujours en fonction d'un problème. Si on n'a pas trouvé le problème, on ne comprend pas la philosophie. Elle reste abstraite. [...] Et les gens, généralement, ils ne voient pas à quels problèmes ça répond [...] parce que les problèmes sont un peu cachés. Et faire de l'histoire de la philosophie c'est restaurer ces problèmes et du coup retrouver la nouveauté de ces concepts.*⁴⁰

Comprendre une théorie ne consiste donc pas seulement à analyser le contenu de ses propositions, à re-théoriser plutôt qu'à historiciser, c'est aussi identifier le problème auquel cette théorie répond, ce qui nécessite obligatoirement une étude précise et scrupuleuse du contexte historique, donc de faire de l'histoire. Mais faire cette histoire, cela revient-il à faire l'histoire de la théorie en question ? Ou, pour le formuler autrement, quelles relations construire, et comment les construire, entre le contexte et la théorie étudiée ? La réponse à cette question ne se trouve pas dans l'*Abécédaire* de Deleuze, mais a connu plusieurs développements chez un philosophe et historien longuement commenté par Deleuze, en l'occurrence Michel Foucault.

Foucault a en effet postulé en plusieurs endroits, notamment à l'époque de l'*Archéologie du savoir*, la nécessité absolue de faire l'histoire des énoncés en partant de leurs « conditions d'existence », lesquelles sont propres à un « espace épistémologique ». Ainsi, dit-il,

*Dans une société, les connaissances, les idées philosophiques, les opinions de tous les jours, mais aussi les institutions, les pratiques commerciales et policières, les mœurs, tout renvoie à un certain savoir implicite propre à cette société. Ce savoir est profondément différent des connaissances que l'on peut trouver dans les livres scientifiques, les théories philosophiques, les justifications religieuses, mais c'est lui qui rend possible à un moment donné l'apparition d'une théorie, d'une opinion, d'une pratique.*⁴¹

En d'autres termes, le savoir propre à une époque détermine « les limites et les formes de la dicibilité », ⁴² en même temps qu'il confère à tout énoncé son coefficient d'acceptabilité. Une théorie, en tant qu'énoncé, consti-

tue nécessairement un dialogue avec tout un ensemble de discours auxquels elle répond, tout en faisant en sorte d'obtenir de ces discours une forme de reconnaissance, propre à favoriser son déploiement social.

Dès lors, faire l'histoire d'une théorie, de ce point de vue, ce serait tenter de comprendre non seulement sa portée intellectuelle mais les conditions de sa dicibilité et le faisceau de son acceptabilité, ce serait se demander à quels problèmes discursifs elle répond, ce qu'elle opère sur ces problèmes, enfin comment et pourquoi cette façon de poser et de régler le ou les problèmes se trouve ou non acceptée ; bref comprendre le mouvement dialectique entre dicibilité et acceptabilité. Cependant, ce travail nécessite préalablement de définir l'espace épistémologique au sein duquel apparaît une théorie, en partant de l'idée que l'espace épistémologique n'est pas forcément superposable à l'espace social. Au contraire, même : le propre d'un espace épistémologique c'est souvent de brouiller les frontières des espaces sociaux.

Mes recherches en cours⁴³ tentent donc de cerner les conditions d'émergence et d'existence de la théorie bazinienne, au sein du cinéma français pris véritablement comme un espace épistémologique. Il me semble d'ailleurs que le terme n'est pas galvaudé puisque tout ce qui constitue le cinéma français à cette époque tend à se rationaliser, voire à se scientificiser : tout, des méthodes de production jusqu'aux discours intellectuels, sans qu'il y ait justement de frontières entre les méthodes de production et les discours intellectuels. La force de la pensée bazinienne, en même temps que ce qui la rend plus acceptable que d'autres théories du cinéma qui lui sont contemporaines (celles d'Epstein, de la Filmologie, etc.), réside justement dans son attention au contexte de production du cinéma de son temps, lequel est d'ailleurs le point de départ récurrent de nombre d'articles de Bazin. Lecteur très attentif de ce qui s'écrit sur le cinéma autour de lui, Bazin ne dialogue pas seulement par textes interposés avec ses pairs (par exemple avec Sadoul⁴⁴), il commente, désapprouve, rebondit face à tout ce qui se dit sur le cinéma, aux plans social, économique et esthétique. Par conséquent non seulement tous ces discours rendent dicible cette théorie, mais cette théorie vise à répondre à chacun de ces discours.

Comprendre Bazin, faire l'histoire de sa théorie, nécessite donc, en premier lieu, d'identifier les problèmes du cinéma français auxquels cette théorie répond. Or cette identification ne peut s'effectuer à partir des seuls textes baziniens : c'est au contraire par la mise en série des discours sur le cinéma, de toutes natures, que l'on peut espérer cerner la pluralité et la complexité de ces problèmes. À l'ampleur de la tâche s'ajoute alors une seconde difficulté : celle qui consiste à organiser un ensemble de problèmes de tous ordres, économiques, sociaux, techniques, qui paraissent livrer un portrait atomisé, totalement épars de la situation réelle et discursive. Enfin, une fois effectué l'ordonnancement de cet ensemble, encore faut-il établir la nature des relations qui se tissent entre ces problèmes et les réponses possibles nichées dans les méandres de la théorie.

Il ne saurait être question, bien évidemment, de détailler ici ce programme de recherche. Tout juste puis-je en donner quelque aperçu. Ainsi, alors que le cinéma français s'inquiète de ne pouvoir renaître, socialement, économiquement, au sortir de la guerre, Bazin érige le réalisme en modèle de production, postulant par exemple « que la réalité est tout à la fois le meilleur décorateur et le meilleur opérateur (et les moins chers) ».⁴⁵ Alors que le cinéma souffre en France, à cette époque, d'un brutal déficit de reconnaissance en terme d'artisticité, du fait notamment des nombreux débats autour de son statut de technique d'enregistrement, Bazin envisage d'emblée une conciliation entre réalisme et artisticité, une conception de l'enregistrement comme signature, qu'il synthétise dans cette formule au sujet de Wyler : « Tout l'effort de la mise en scène tend à se supprimer elle-même ».⁴⁶ Enfin, alors que le cinéma, en France, tente de s'ériger tout à la fois en objet et en outil de connaissance, Bazin pose, avec d'autres, les bases d'une connaissance scientifique du cinéma, de son être comme de son histoire, tout en s'intéressant aux relations que le cinéma tisse aussi bien avec le réel qu'avec les autres arts. On pourrait ainsi multiplier les exemples, qui montreraient tous la même idée : chacun des discours qui agitent le cinéma français de l'après-guerre trouve non seulement une forme de réponse dans la théorie bazinienne, mais aussi une sorte de synthèse, jusque dans sa dimension contradictoire, car Bazin n'élude jamais aucune des

positions en présence et tente au contraire de les faire tenir ensemble, de les concilier voire de les réconcilier, par la force de ses propositions et de ses formules.

Étudiant la manière dont les propositions baziniennes transforment l'espace épistémologique du cinéma (en même temps qu'elles contribuent à le créer), je me suis néanmoins exposé à la même limite que beaucoup des autres exégètes de Bazin : celle de la minoration, voire de la non prise en compte de l'inscription de Bazin dans le champ social religieux ou, pour le dire autrement, celle d'une réduction idéologique de l'espace épistémologique au sein duquel Bazin prend place. Car on aurait tort de croire que Bazin ne répond qu'à des problèmes émanant du monde professionnel du cinéma. Ses textes sont aussi traversés par une lutte pied à pied avec une pensée catholique, dont il est issu, et qui a pour objectif de moraliser le cinéma. Cette pensée catholique prône une évaluation des films à l'aune de leur sujet, de la psychologie de leurs personnages.⁴⁷ De fait, on ne peut comprendre le formalisme qui affleure dans le discours bazinien sur le cinéma, qui lui est tant reproché par une partie de la critique (notamment communiste), si on n'intègre pas le fait qu'il s'agit d'un moyen de transformer la lecture moralisatrice du cinéma défendue par une majorité de catholiques. En d'autres termes, Bazin résout de manière inédite le problème de la tension, vécue par beaucoup de catholiques, entre la valeur esthétique et la valeur idéologique, notamment en reversant la morale du côté de la forme.

On le voit : tenter de faire l'histoire d'une théorie revient à plonger dans le puits sans fond des sources à dépouiller, des champs à explorer, des questions à résoudre. Dès lors, il ne peut y avoir, hormis dans le cadre de pratiques pédagogiques, évidemment, d'histoire des théories, chaque théorie constituant en elle-même un vaste territoire de recherche. Surtout si on l'étudie dans toute sa diachronie : histoire de l'élaboration de telle théorie, de son avènement, de sa circulation, de ses formes de socialisation. En revanche, il est un territoire que j'ai laissé délibérément de côté, en dépit de son importance, et notamment avec le cas Bazin. C'est l'histoire de la théorie comme notion, de l'émergence du vocable de « théorie » appliqué au cinéma jusqu'à la fixation de ses premières applications. Bien sûr, ce type de recherche est nécessairement lié à une aire culturelle précise : l'émergence de la notion de théorie du cinéma en France ne s'effectue sans aucun doute pas de la même manière, au même moment, dans le même but, selon les mêmes modalités qu'en URSS, en Allemagne, etc., ce qui ajoute encore une difficulté supplémentaire. Pourtant, il s'agit sans doute d'un enjeu de connaissance essentiel : ainsi, par exemple, la construction de Bazin en théoricien par les *Cahiers du cinéma*, au moment de sa mort, vaut tout autant pour ce qu'elle dit de Bazin que pour ce qu'elle sous-entend de l'importance sociale de la notion de « théorie » du cinéma, à cette époque. Entre les débuts de Bazin et sa mort, non seulement la notion a pris tout son sens en France, mais elle devient l'objet de luttes, dont Bazin est aussi partie prenante (par exemple à l'encontre de la Filmologie). C'est peut-être une autre histoire – l'histoire de la théorie du cinéma comme notion – mais on voit ainsi qu'elle est presque intriquée, en France, à l'histoire de la théorie bazinienne.

L'histoire de la théorie existe, donc. Mais la complexité de son existence est en un sens un frein à son existence même...

Notes

¹ Jacques Aumont, « L'Histoire du cinéma n'existe pas », dans *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 21, n° 2-3, printemps 2011, pp. 153-168.

² Joël Magny (sous la direction de), *CinémAction*, n° 20, « Théories du cinéma », 1978. La dimension historique est affichée par le choix d'un plan chronologique : « Origines et premières théories », « Les Années 50, l'esthétique et le réel », etc.

- ³ Francesco Casetti, *Les Théories du cinéma depuis 1945*, Armand Colin, Paris 2005 (première édition, italienne, en 1978).
- ⁴ Robert C. Allen, Douglas Gomery, *Faire l'histoire du cinéma, les modèles américains*, Nathan Université, Paris 1993 (première édition, américaine, en 1985).
- ⁵ Michèle Lagny, *De l'histoire du cinéma, méthode historique et histoire du cinéma*, Armand Colin, Paris 1992.
- ⁶ Francesco Casetti, *Les Théories du cinéma depuis 1945*, cit., pp. 340-342.
- ⁷ Jacques Aumont, « Un film peut-il être un acte de théorie ? », dans *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 17, n° 2-3, printemps 2007.
- ⁸ Siegfried Kracauer, *L'Histoire des avant-dernières choses*, Stock, Paris 2006, p. 69.
- ⁹ Gérard Genette, *Poétique et histoire*, dans Id., *Figures III*, Seuil, Paris 1972, p. 18.
- ¹⁰ Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, *Le Sommeil paradoxal*, les Éditions de l'œil, Montreuil 2014.
- ¹¹ Dans l'édition française des actes du colloque « Opening Bazin » qu'il co-dirigea avec Dudley Andrew, Hervé Joubert-Laurencin revendique clairement cette position, dans sa préface : « Ouvrir Bazin est principalement un travail de réflexion sur la place théorique et stylistique de Bazin ». S'il ambitionne également d'étudier la place de Bazin « dans l'histoire des théories » (ce qui constitue bien sûr un chantier différent que celui visant à faire l'histoire de la théorie bazinienne), il regrette simultanément que les contributeurs du volume ne soient « pas encore tous des historiens-théoriciens » (Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, *Ouvrir Bazin : la voie est ouverte*, dans Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, Dudley Andrew (sous la direction de), *Ouvrir Bazin*, les Éditions de l'œil, Montreuil 2014, p. 7).
- ¹² Voir par exemple sa postface à Siegfried Kracauer, *De Caligari à Hitler*, l'Âge d'homme, Lausanne 2009.
- ¹³ Pierre Sorlin, « Promenade dans Rome », dans *Iris, revue de théorie de l'image et du son*, vol. 2, n° 2, deuxième semestre 1984, p. 5.
- ¹⁴ Jacques Aumont, « Un film peut-il être un acte de théorie ? », cit., p. 199.
- ¹⁵ Jacques Aumont, Michel Marie, *Dictionnaire théorique et critique du cinéma*, Nathan, Paris 2001, p. 49.
- ¹⁶ Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues, Jean-Louis Leutrat, *Penser le cinéma*, Klincksieck études, Paris 2001, p. 122.
- ¹⁷ Jacques Aumont, « Crise dans la crise », dans *Hors Cadre*, n° 7, hiver 1988-1989, p. 200.
- ¹⁸ Francesco Casetti, *Les Théories du cinéma depuis 1945*, cit., p. 7.
- ¹⁹ Dès 1967, moins de dix ans après la mort de Bazin, la notice que lui consacre Roger Boussinot dans son *Encyclopédie du cinéma* (Paris, Bordas) est traversée par cette incertitude quant au statut à attribuer à Bazin, « considéré [...] par beaucoup de bons esprits comme le meilleur critique cinématographique de l'après-guerre » mais, simultanément, « pas le très grand essayiste que certains ont voulu voir en lui » (p. 138).
- ²⁰ Lettre reproduite dans André Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ?*, vol. 4, Éditions du Cerf, Paris 1962, p. 150.
- ²¹ André Bazin, *Avant-propos*, dans *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ?*, vol. 1, Éditions du Cerf, Paris 1958, p. 9.
- ²² Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, *Le Sommeil paradoxal*, cit., p. 21.
- ²³ *Idem*, p. 19.
- ²⁴ *Idem*, p. 24.
- ²⁵ Roger Leenhardt, « Du côté de Socrate », dans *Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 91, janvier 1959, p. 16.
- ²⁶ Éric Rohmer, « La 'Somme' d'André Bazin », dans *Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 91, janvier 1959, p. 37.

²⁷ André Bazin, *Avant-propos*, cit., p. 7.

²⁸ *Idem*, p. 8.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, *Le Sommeil paradoxal*, cit., pp. 24-26.

³¹ Publié initialement dans *L'Écran français*, n° 8, 22 août 1945 et n° 9, 29 août 1945.

³² André Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ?*, cit., 1985.

³³ Éric Rohmer, « La 'Somme' d'André Bazin », cit., p. 37.

³⁴ *Idem*, pp. 37-38.

³⁵ Dudley Andrew, Hervé Joubert-Laurencin (sous la direction de), *Opening Bazin. Postwar Film Theory and its Afterlife*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011. Je me réfère ici à l'édition anglophone (plutôt qu'à l'édition française, déjà mentionnée) car elle témoigne plus précisément des contributions au colloque du même nom (l'édition française a supprimé certaines contributions et ajouté deux textes). Certaines contributions ont cependant opéré un retour scrupuleux à des textes de Bazin jusqu'ici peu étudiés et cités, comme celle de Ludovic Cortade, présente dans les deux éditions.

³⁶ *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze* (Pierre-André Boutang, 1988), DVD édité par les Éditions Montparnasse.

³⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Idem*.

³⁸ Dudley Andrew, *André Bazin*, Cahiers du cinéma/Cinémathèque française, Paris 1983 (première édition, américaine, en 1978).

³⁹ Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 2010. L'édition francophone a été publiée sous le titre *Une idée de cinéma*, Bruxelles, (SIC), 2014.

⁴⁰ Gilles Deleuze, cit.

⁴¹ Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses* (entretien avec Raymond Bellour), dans *Les Lettres françaises*, n° 1125, 31 mars-6 avril 1966, pp. 3-4, reproduit dans Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits I (1954-1975)*, Gallimard, Paris 2001, p. 526⁴² Michel Foucault, « Réponse à une question », dans *Esprit*, n° 371, mai 1968, repris dans Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits I (1954-1975)*, cit., p. 709.

⁴³ Pour en avoir un aperçu, voir par exemple « La 'Transformation Bazin' ou Pour une histoire de la critique sans critique », dans *1895 : revue d'histoire du cinéma*, n° 62, décembre 2010, pp. 9-27.

⁴⁴ Voir François Albera, Laurent Le Forestier, dossier « Ouvrons Bazin ! », dans *1895 : revue d'histoire du cinéma*, n° 67, été 2012, pp. 94-143.

⁴⁵ André Bazin, « Les Frères Bouquinquant, le meilleur film de Louis Daquin », dans *L'Écran français*, n° 139, 24 février 1948, p. 7.

⁴⁶ André Bazin, « Le Cinéma est-il majeur ? Le nouveau style américain », dans *L'Écran français*, n° 60, 21 août 1946, p. 5 et p. 12.

⁴⁷ Sur ces questions, voir Mélisande Levantopoulos, « La Construction collective d'un regard critique. Les catholiques et le cinéma dans la France du XX^e siècle (1895-1995) », 2013, doctorat en histoire contemporaine de l'Université Paris 8, dirigé par Danielle Tartakowsky.

Le Cinéma et l'histoire, deux « façons de penser » à part en vis-à-vis ? Notes sur l'indétermination du cinéma¹

Le cinéma et l'histoire en vis-à-vis ? Afin d'approcher une réponse à cette interrogation qui a initié ma communication, mon propos s'articule autour de quelques écrits de Walter Benjamin et de Siegfried Kracauer. Plus précisément, mon intervention s'appuie sur l'idée d'indétermination du cinéma que Kracauer développe dans *Théorie du film*. D'entrée, et sous forme de préalable, on gardera de Kracauer cette idée que l'appréhension de la « réalité matérielle » par la photographie et le cinéma est comparable, et qu'il y a ainsi lieu de considérer que ses réflexions sur la photographie valent, de ce point de vue, pour le cinéma. Ça et là dans différents écrits, par exemple lorsqu'il disserte sur l'idée de photographie soutenue par Marcel Proust, Kracauer pense autant au cinéma. Du moins peut-on se permettre d'appréhender la photographie et le cinéma indistinctement dans ses propos. Pour les évoquer ensemble, Kracauer parle des « médias photographiques ». Ensuite, on peut aisément convenir que les « questions d'histoire » et l'intérêt pour la photographie ou le cinéma sont pour Benjamin et Kracauer essentiels autant qu'indissociables. Affirmant tous deux les enchevêtrements profonds de l'histoire et du cinéma, les abordant non pas l'une face à l'autre, l'une au regard de l'autre, mais bien l'une avec l'autre, l'une et l'autre ensemble, on peut d'emblée douter de ce vis-à-vis entre histoire et cinéma. L'indistinction de l'histoire et du cinéma, ou plus largement encore de l'art, est certainement un des principes communs aux pensées de Kracauer et de Benjamin. Ce que Bruno Tackels écrit à propos de *L'Œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproductibilité technique* vaut certainement pour l'idée d'histoire que Benjamin et Kracauer défendent dans plusieurs de leurs contributions : « L'art ne peut être une forme hypostasiée, comme création séparée, indépendante du monde – et du moment – de son émergence ».²

Le « souci de l'histoire » de Benjamin trouve son aboutissement dans les *Thèses sur le concept d'histoire*, son ultime texte, écrit dans l'urgence avant le suicide. Ces *Thèses* sont sans doute, comme le propose Tackels, plus qu'un « testament intellectuel », en réalité « le dévoilement de ce que sa pensée tenait fermement caché depuis ses premiers tâtonnements jusqu'aux textes de la maturité ». Dans une lettre à Gretel Adorno en avril 1940, Benjamin dira de ces idées les avoir « préservées pendant vingt ans, oui, préservées » insiste-t-il « en les dissi-

mulant même à moi-même ».³ De fait, comment envisager son *Livre des passages* en négligeant les questions de théorie et d'histoire qui le traversent, qui l'entrecoupent, qui déterminent ce projet impossible car, littéralement, sans fin possible ? À n'en pas douter, *Le Livre des passages* éprouve une forme d'écriture singulière, et pourquoi pas une nouvelle forme d'écriture historique, elle-même largement inspirée d'expériences de montages cinématographiques permettant la collusion d'éléments épars qui font sens ensemble. Enfin, il vaut de noter que l'« Exposé » qui introduit en 1939 *Le Livre des Passages* se distingue de l'ouverture écrite quatre ans plus tôt, d'abord par la place qui y occupe désormais la notion de fantasmagorie et l'affirmation de l'idée d'histoire qu'il défend alors et qui s'impose un an plus tard, en 1940, l'année des *Thèses*. On peut ajouter que la deuxième version de *L'Œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproductibilité technique* date elle aussi de 1939, alors que des questions d'histoire préoccupent au premier chef Benjamin.

Publié en 1969, trois ans après la mort de Kracauer, *L'Histoire des avant-dernières choses* est lui aussi un ouvrage prioritairement dédié à l'histoire, et constitue l'achèvement d'une réflexion sur les liens entre la photographie et l'historisme entamée quarante ans plus tôt dans les colonnes d'un journal de Francfort et prolongée dans *Théorie du film* en 1960. Essai d'historiographie, en même temps qu'un essai théorique ouvert, inachevé, *L'Histoire des avant-dernières choses* pense de nouvelles formes d'écriture de l'histoire, elles-mêmes déterminées par une réflexion continue sur la photographie et le cinéma. Les premiers développements de ce livre sont un retour aux premiers textes de l'auteur, dont un article fameux sur la photographie de 1927, mais aussi un écho à *Théorie du film* écrit six ans plus tôt. Ses deux derniers essais, *L'Histoire des avant-dernières choses* et *Théorie du film*, sont certainement l'affirmation de ce qui traverse une œuvre assez hétéroclite au premier regard, une sorte de mosaïque (un mot que Kracauer aimait), une mosaïque un peu déconcertante parce que concernée par des sujets anecdotiques en apparence, d'une diversité et d'une complexité déstabilisantes qui expliquent peut-être la reconnaissance toute relative, encore aujourd'hui, de ses chroniques sur Berlin ou sur les petits employés, et ses articles sur les badauds, la mode ou encore la danse et la photographie.

Ensemble, ces deux livres de Kracauer affirment de possibles analogies entre histoire et cinéma, qui n'ont d'ailleurs pas échappé aux lecteurs les plus assidus de Kracauer, dont Philippe Despoix, Nia Perivolaropoulou ou Jean-Louis Leutrat, dans la préface de l'édition française de *Théorie du film* et dans l'ouvrage collectif *Siegfried Kracauer penseur de l'histoire*.⁴ Dans la revue d'histoire *Vingtième siècle*, Antoine de Baecque décèle, une proximité entre les démarches de Godard dans les *Histoire(s) du cinéma* et de Kracauer dans *Théorie du film*.⁵ De fait, cet échange entre histoire et cinéma est précisément à quoi œuvre Kracauer lorsqu'il rédige, à quelques années d'intervalle, un ouvrage de théorie du cinéma et un livre sur l'écriture de l'histoire, comme les deux pièces d'une même réflexion.⁶ Sans les confondre, Kracauer ne manque jamais de dire la proximité de l'histoire et du cinéma. Une formule identique, en deux endroits de *L'Histoire des avant-dernières choses*, l'affirme, quand il écrit : « si l'histoire est une science, c'est une science à part », et ensuite, une trentaine de pages plus loin : « si la photographie est un art, c'est un art à part ».⁷ L'objet de ces deux ouvrages est bien ce parcours à double sens entre cinéma et histoire, entre deux façons de « penser à part ». Kracauer précise cette analogie lorsqu'il dit les liens particuliers et obligatoirement indéfectibles que le cinéma et l'histoire entretiennent à ce qu'il appelle « la réalité matérielle », mais aussi l'emprise que le cinéma et l'histoire peuvent avoir sur ce réel en vue de son interprétation. Critiquant Proust et invitant à repenser le « caractère indéterminé de l'image photographique », ce qu'il écrit de « l'approche photographique », en 1951, vaut pour le travail de l'historien : « Il est certain que Proust exagère le caractère indéterminé de l'image photographique, de façon tout aussi schématique que l'effet de dépersonnalisation qu'elle opère. En réalité, le photographe confère à ses images structure et signification dans la mesure même où il effectue des choix chargés de sens. Elles enregistrent, certes, la nature mais en même temps elles reflètent ses efforts pour la décrypter ».⁸ Autour de cette notion d'indétermination, une idée de photographie et donc de cinéma s'impose en même temps qu'une idée d'histoire.

En effet, ce que Kracauer écrit à propos de l'un, le cinéma, il le reprend, au mot près pour l'autre, l'histoire. Dans *L'Histoire des avant-dernières choses*, il note en effet : « L'historien obéit à deux tendances – la tendance réaliste qui le pousse à s'emparer de toute donnée intéressant le réel en même temps qu'une présence de tous les instants, celle d'une instance, et la tendance formatrice qui attend de lui qu'il explique le matériau disponible. Il est à la fois passif et actif, un enregistreur et un créateur ».⁹

Par ailleurs, Kracauer s'interroge sur la proximité entre l'histoire et quelque pratique artistique. Toujours dans *L'Histoire*, il n'est pas loin de postuler la place de l'histoire, entre art et science, à équidistance de l'un et de l'autre. Il parle d'un « domaine intermédiaire » :

*Sa prétention à être une science est tout sauf incontestée. On ne peut pas non plus dire que c'est un art, bien qu'elle ait des caractères d'un genre littéraire. Et bien entendu, elle n'est pas non plus affaire d'opinions impressionnistes. L'histoire, telle que nous la connaissons aujourd'hui, se situe quelque part entre les dimensions définies par ces recherches et ces préférences. Elle relève d'un domaine intermédiaire. Néanmoins, ce domaine est loin d'être reconnu pour tel.*¹⁰

Dans *Théorie*, le film est frappé d'une forme d'indétermination parce qu'il est pris entre deux feux, entre l'enregistrement du réel et son assimilation, son déchiffrement, entre la « tendance au réalisme » et la « tendance formatrice », entre « l'allégeance du photographe à la réalité et son travail formateur ». Pour Kracauer, et contrairement à ce que laisse entendre Proust, la photographie n'est pas une forme particulière de miroir. « Les photographies », dit-il, « ne sont pas de pures et simples copies de la nature : elles la métamorphosent ». Cet « acte de voir » se singularise ainsi par le « pouvoir révélateur de l'objectif » en même temps qu'il « tient aussi de l'explorateur ».¹¹

Le juste équilibre entre deux tendances, une « tendance au réalisme » et une « tendance formatrice », est donc bien ce que Kracauer cherche *et* en histoire *et* en cinéma. C'est en ce sens qu'il vaut de comprendre l'analogie qu'il opère entre cinéma et histoire, qui, définitivement, n'est donc pas une analogie de surface, une vague ressemblance, mais bien un point de convergence entre un art et une science, entre deux façons de penser à part. Il y insiste en effet : face au réel, qui doit rester leur « objet » commun, le cinéaste et l'historien ont pour impératif de donner une juste impulsion à leur faculté formatrice qui doit caractériser leur démarche à l'un autant qu'à l'autre. Kracauer écrit :

*Cependant, le recours à des analogies se justifie, pour ne pas dire qu'il s'impose, pour deux raisons. D'abord, l'analogie entre l'historiographie et les médias photographiques n'est pas qu'un expédient facile, elle résulte du fait incontournable que le travail dans les deux domaines s'articule sur des conditions identiques : les deux métiers ont affaire à des mondes donnés dont la structure est comparable et ils doivent par conséquent canaliser de la même façon les possibilités créatrices des personnes au travail.*¹²

Si le texte sur la photographie de 1927 de Kracauer, comme les *Thèses* de Benjamin du reste, concourt à réfuter l'historisme et à privilégier une histoire à rebrousse-poil (c'est-à-dire pas seulement l'histoire des vainqueurs, des classes dominantes), faite de chocs par des détours, par des associations et des collages improbables, ce serait ne pas rendre grâce à Kracauer que de considérer que sa réflexion s'est arrêtée là alors qu'il rédige dans les années 1960 *Théorie* et *L'Histoire des avant-dernières choses*. Il est un lecteur attentif des historiens qui lui sont contemporains (les *Annales* et la Nouvelle Histoire sont notamment passées par là). Enfin, si Kracauer ne dit jamais que les « questions » que lui et son ami Benjamin se posaient dès les années 1920 ne sont plus d'actualité et s'il aime revenir sur les premières intuitions de ses chroniques allemandes, il réfléchit bien dans *L'Histoire des avant-dernières choses* à « l'histoire, telle que nous la connaissons aujourd'hui », non sans dire sa

méfiance de « la perspective scientifique et l'obsession philosophique des questions dernières qui contribuent à fausser les problèmes impliqués dans l'exploration historique ».¹³

L'Histoire des avant-dernières choses est donc une critique lucide de l'état de l'histoire vers 1960 en même temps qu'un essai théorique, prospectif, sur ce que peut l'histoire, une forme de théorie de l'histoire qui s'inscrit dans la foulée d'une théorie du film, en vue d'une écriture renouvelée de l'histoire du cinéma, et pourquoi pas quelque chose comme « une histoire théorique du cinéma », voire, en reprenant les mots de François Hartog sur quelque tendance des études historiques et des sciences sociales des années 1980, « quelque chose comme une épistémologie historique ou une historiographie épistémologique ».¹⁴

Manière commune d'affirmer l'enracinement dans le présent des questions qu'ils posent aussi bien à l'histoire qu'à la photographie ou au cinéma, *L'Œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproductibilité technique* et *Théorie du film* s'intéressent bien en leurs épilogues respectifs au « cinéma aujourd'hui » d'alors et au « film à notre époque » à l'aube des années 1960. L'écriture de l'histoire paraît chez eux définitivement indissociable de postulats théoriques, de la même façon que l'étude de deux domaines distincts, un art et une science, fussent-ils « à part », s'envisage dans un même mouvement, où s'enchevêtrent des questions d'histoire et de théorie, dont une théorie du film. Par ailleurs, dans « *L'Œuvre d'art* », Benjamin affirme une certaine correspondance entre le cinéma et l'histoire quand il affirme que la caméra permet « pour la première fois de connaître par expérience l'inconscient optique, comme la psychanalyse l'inconscient pulsionnel ».¹⁵ Voilà en effet peut-être un des points de rencontre les plus forts entre Benjamin et Kracauer autour d'une idée commune de cinéma et d'histoire : lutter encore et toujours contre les présupposés d'une histoire dictée par les « vainqueurs », sans cesse prospecter en *terra incognita*, atteindre ce qu'on ne sait déjà, ce que l'histoire nous dicte, et même jusqu'à accéder à ce qui n'a pas eu lieu, au dévoilement de ce réel bien présent mais parfois imperceptible, une sorte d'inconscient historique. C'est exactement ce que Benjamin écrit dans la Thèse III : « De tout ce qui jamais advint rien ne doit être considéré comme perdu pour l'Histoire ».¹⁶ Tackels relève que chez Benjamin

*l'historien a pour mission de dévoiler ce que toute fantasmagorie tente de dissimuler : la marchandisation généralisée du monde humain [...] Il faut attendre le mouvement de l'interprétation pour que se révèle le sens authentique crypté, enfoui dans le contenu manifeste de l'image. La tâche de l'historien est donc d'interpréter ces images du collectif pour que se révèle leur sens historique. L'historien devient, en ce sens très précis, un « interprète ».*¹⁷

Dans cette foulée, comment ici ne pas se rappeler Godard, qui ouvre l'épisode 2A des *Histoire(s) du cinéma* par ces mots : « Faire une description précise de ce qui n'a pas eu lieu est le travail de l'historien », reprenant à Oscar Wilde une affirmation presque identique : « Décrire avec précision ce qui ne s'est jamais produit n'est pas seulement l'occupation normale de l'historien, c'est le privilège inaliénable de tout homme cultivé et talentueux ».¹⁸ Au regard de *Théorie du film* et de « *L'Œuvre d'art* », les *Histoire(s) du cinéma* de Godard occupent possiblement une place de choix aux frontières de l'histoire et du cinéma, Godard cherchant une forme cinématographique qui entre en résonance avec l'histoire. Chez Godard, le cinéma sert d'interprète à l'histoire. Dans l'épilogue de *Théorie*, en des termes proches de Benjamin, Kracauer écrit :

*Le film rend visible ce que nous n'avions pas vu, et que peut-être ne pouvions pas voir, avant qu'il ne soit là. Il nous aide puissamment à découvrir le monde matériel en même temps que ses correspondances psychophysiques. Nous rédimeons littéralement ce monde de sa condition dormante, de son état d'inexistence virtuelle, quand nous nous efforçons d'en faire l'expérience par le truchement de la caméra. [...] Le cinéma peut se définir comme le médium le plus apte à promouvoir la rédemption de la réalité matérielle. Par ses images, il nous permet, pour la première fois, d'emporter avec nous les objets et les événements qui constituent le flux de la vie matérielle.*¹⁹

Pour Benjamin et Kracauer, le cinéma consacre un regard fondamentalement reconfiguré, renouvelé. Si une étude mériterait certainement d'être effectuée parmi les écrits de théoriciens et de cinéastes issus des années 1920, on peut relever ici que Jean Epstein, envisageant le cinématographe comme une machine intelligente, y place ses espoirs en vue d'approcher les tensions paradoxales du réel et d'accéder à un « enrichissement de la sensibilité ». Le cinéma a, ajoute-t-il, cette capacité à « mettre en jeu le pouvoir interprétatif et révélateur de la machine [dans les domaines de la vue et de l'ouïe] ».²⁰ Chez Epstein, Benjamin et Kracauer, la caméra est une interprète du réel, qui est, du reste, le travail que Benjamin et Kracauer assignent à l'histoire.

Un historien belge, Carl Havelange, a bien soumis, voici quelque temps, une réflexion dédiée aux « Indéterminations de la photographie », envisageant une possible indétermination des usages de la photographie.²¹ Cette indétermination culturelle de la photo n'est évidemment pas étrangère à mon propos, mais elle ne semble pas suffisamment se préoccuper de l'image elle-même, ce qui est à l'œuvre *dans* l'image, et pour ce qui nous occupe plus précisément ici, *dans* l'image cinématographique. Sans jamais oublier l'analogie forte que Kracauer établit entre les fonctions du cinéma et de l'histoire dans ses réflexions théoriques sur l'un et l'autre ensemble, l'indétermination dont je veux parler n'est pas exactement ou pas seulement celle-là. Il s'agit plutôt d'une autre forme d'indétermination, qui *travaillerait* les films, quelque chose à l'œuvre *dans* les images elles-mêmes, au cœur même de l'acte cinématographique, où s'exerce une tension entre les emprises à la fois concurrentes et convergentes du cinéma sur le réel et celle du cinéaste sur l'image.

Le juste équilibre entre les deux tendances du cinéma, les « tendances au réalisme et formatrice », voilà ce que Kracauer trouve dans telle photographie d'Atget et dans tel film documentaire de Franju. Cette indétermination à l'œuvre dans les images, il la désigne par un mot, parlant des « fissures » qui caractérisent notamment les films de David W. Griffith. S'arrêtant alors sur les tensions entre cinéma et théâtre, il écrit :

[À] la différence de la plupart de ses successeurs, [Griffith] est parfaitement conscient de l'abîme qui sépare l'histoire de type théâtral du récit cinématographique. À l'exception de ses séquences finales de poursuite, dans lesquelles il tente en vain de mêler ces deux modes incompatibles de représentation, il sépare toujours les choses qui ne vont pas ensemble. Ses films regorgent de fissures [je souligne] qui sont la manifestation de son instinct cinématographiques plutôt que de sa maladresse technique.²²

Ces fissures sont de l'ordre d'une lézarde de la « tendance réaliste » du cinéma autant que le lieu de friction entre le cinéma et d'autres pratiques (théâtre, peinture, roman, etc.) ; ces fissures sont comme un éclat dans un « matériau brut », par l'intrusion d'une instance formatrice, d'une présence prégnante qui, elle-même, ne peut, écrit-il, « effacer ce penchant vers l'inorganisé et le diffus qui affecte [la photographie ou le film] en tant qu'enregistrement du réel ».²³

Avec Jean Epstein pour fil conducteur ici, quelques exemples pris dans *Théorie du film*, permettent de préciser la portée de la réflexion de Kracauer. Sur les acteurs, à l'instar des « modèles » de Robert Bresson, il écrit : « Ce n'est pas un hasard si les réalisateurs qui s'attachent à rendre compte le plus largement de la vie réelle reprochent volontiers aux acteurs professionnels de 'simuler'. Tout comme Epstein, qui s'en prenait à la 'simulation professionnelle', Rossellini trouvait, dit-on, que les acteurs 'simulaient les émotions' ».²⁴ Sur le son, avec en évidence *Le Tempestaire*, aux côtés de *M. le Maudit* de Fritz Lang et de *Blackmail* d'Alfred Hitchcock, ce qui doit prévaloir dans les choix d'un cinéaste, c'est d'inciter, dit-il, « le spectateur à explorer un univers qui appartient essentiellement au cinéma ».²⁵ Ailleurs, à propos des tensions entre fiction et documentaire, et cette fois à propos de *Finis Terrae*, il indique que ce film est « d'un grand intérêt, car il met en évidence les difficultés auxquelles ont affaire les cinéastes qui se proposent de tisser quelque histoire trouvée très élaborée dans la texture non narrative de plans documentaires ».²⁶

C'est avec cet œil qu'on peut tenter de regarder des films qui ne sont pas évoqués dans *Théorie du film*. L'indétermination du cinéma, c'est peut-être ce qui joue, sous la forme d'un gag, dans le premier Charlot. Dans *Charlot est content de lui*, sorti le 7 février 1914, il y a sans doute quelque chose de cet ordre à l'œuvre, dénoncé par cette intrusion d'un personnage décalé au beau milieu du réel qu'enregistre un opérateur appliqué. Le cinéma n'est peut-être rien d'autre que cette situation : une emprise sur le réel en même temps qu'une instance formatrice s'y immisçant, exerçant son emprise sur le réel – ce que signifie la présence incongrue de Charlot au beau milieu de ce réel qui, alors, s'en trouve mis à mal. Charlot fait face au réel, s'en empare (il en fait son terrain de jeu, il investit un espace qui n'est pas le sien), se met là où il ne faut pas, au cœur de ce réel que capte une caméra pour un film à vocation documentaire. Dans un registre particulier, celui du burlesque, c'est-à-dire un art du contre-pied, Charlot désigne les frontières de la caméra-réalité.

C'est aussi l'enjeu de quelques comédies musicales qui font face à leur propre histoire (leurs liens au café-concert ou au music-hall) et qui ne manquent pas de se situer à la jonction exacte de la dissemblance et de l'hommage du cinéma pour Broadway : dans des films comme *Applause* de Rouben Mamoulian (1929), *Dames* chorégraphié par Busby Berkeley (1934) ou encore *French cancan* de Jean Renoir (1955), dans tous les cas, le regard mobile du spectateur de cinéma se distingue radicalement du regard immobile du spectateur des théâtres, affirmant ainsi ce qui différencie deux pratiques et deux dispositifs à la fois très proches et distincts. C'est bien pour cette raison qu'un film comme *Le Chanteur de jazz* d'Alan Crosland (1927) vaut d'être regardé avec attention, pour les fissures qui le traversent d'une scène chantée à l'autre, parfois au cœur d'une même scène chantée, entre Broadway et Hollywood, entre la frontalité assumée du chanteur de Broadway et l'évitement caractérisé du regard à la caméra de l'acteur d'Hollywood, entre Al Jolson, la star de Broadway, et son personnage, Jack Robin, entre le regard immobile du spectateur de music-hall et le regard mobile du spectateur de cinéma. Ce qui, au fond, inquiète au moment de ladite révolution du parlant, où *in fine* les ruptures et les continuités s'équilibrent, c'est bien l'emprise trop grande que peuvent avoir d'autres pratiques sur le cinéma, dont les spectacles de Broadway ou des cafés-concerts, sans oublier des domaines aux frontières du cinéma comme le disque ou la radio qui investissent le cinéma des années 1910 aux années 1930.

L'inquiétude qui prévaut vers 1930 ou encore aujourd'hui avec l'avènement du numérique est peut-être due à la présence par trop visible de fissures *dans* les films. De ses origines à aujourd'hui, car, crise ou pas crise, mort ou pas mort, du muet au parlant, de l'argentique au numérique, du noir et blanc à la couleur, au CinémaScope ou que sais-je encore ?, de la décantation du cinéma par la télévision dans les années 1950 (comme l'écrivait Jean Renoir) aux « nouvelles nouvelles et encore nouvelles images ou technologies » aujourd'hui, en et hors les salles de cinéma, le cinéma se caractérise certainement, hier et aujourd'hui, par l'incertitude de ses frontières, au point d'en constituer un de ses traits permanents, et même une de ses éventuelles singularités. Des crises plus ou moins marquantes au gré des discours les accompagnant, ne font que de remettre au grand jour cette indétermination du cinéma, son impossibilité à se fixer. Rien de plus, rien de moins. En ce sens, faire l'histoire (du cinéma), ce n'est peut-être rien d'autre que d'approcher une histoire de ces points de friction entre le réel et sa représentation à l'œuvre dans un film, entre « la présence de l'imprévisible » en cinéma et « la préméditation artistique » dans d'autres domaines (théâtre, peinture, roman).²⁷ À l'époque de l'émergence de « nouvelles images », entre internet et jeu vidéo, l'actualité de la réflexion de Benjamin et Kracauer sur les indéterminations du cinéma, entre médiums et médias, ne manque pas de frapper.

Toute histoire qui souhaite, vaille que vaille, effacer l'indétermination du cinéma et toute pratique cinématographique qui feint de l'ignorer n'a sans doute d'autre souci que de dissimuler ce qui est à l'œuvre, ce qui « jamais advint », tout ce que précisément dévoilent les incertitudes qui caractérisent le cinéma et son histoire. Cette histoire du cinéma des « vainqueurs » est bien ce que Benjamin et Kracauer réfutent lorsqu'ils dénoncent l'illusion fantasmagorique frappant *et* l'histoire *et* le cinéma. Les films défendus par Kracauer se singularisent

en effet toujours par des moments parfois très brefs, des instants, des mouvements qui fêlent le « matériau brut » du cinéma par l'intrusion d'une instance formatrice. Cette tension est certainement ce qui travaille également les films de cinéastes comme Renoir, Epstein, Rossellini ou encore Van der Keuken, justement parce qu'ils se font tous les interprètes du réel et qu'ils ont plutôt une conscience aiguë que chaque film est une expérience renouvelée, imprévisible, entre un « matériau brut » et son « explorateur », toujours dans l'attente qu'il se passe « quelque chose » dans la confrontation de la caméra et du réel, du cinéma et de la vie. Plutôt qu'une histoire visant à sa complétude, l'histoire du cinéma à laquelle engagent ces projets cinématographiques n'est rien d'autre qu'une histoire elle-même déterminée par ces *fissures*, où l'histoire et le cinéma conviennent tous les deux de leurs rapprochements autant que de leurs écarts avec le réel.

À l'évidence, l'idée d'indétermination a cette vertu de couper court à toute velléité téléologique, dans la mesure où, après elle, il ne peut plus guère être question d'envisager un parcours qui, depuis des origines elles-mêmes incertaines (le pré-cinéma, les jouets optiques, la photographie, quoi d'autre encore), conduirait le cinéma vers... lui-même, soit une forme aboutie, complète, totale, finie. Les indéterminations du cinéma et de l'histoire ensemble, de leurs contours, l'un pouvant être frappé par les mouvements de l'autre, voilà qui peut nous ramener à proximité des *séries de séries* de *L'Archéologie du savoir* de Michel Foucault, publié en 1969 comme *L'Histoire des avant-dernières choses*, afin de privilégier non pas une histoire de séries distinctes les unes des autres, mais plutôt une histoire articulée autour des points de friction entre ces séries. En ce sens, il n'est pas intempestif de postuler la proximité de leur démarche et du modèle d'une histoire « vivante » proposé par Foucault qui, littéralement, nous *prédispose* à évaluer les ambitions de Benjamin et Kracauer étudiant la photographie et le cinéma, entre histoire et théorie. On peut lire aux premières pages de *L'Archéologie du savoir* :

*Le problème qui s'ouvre alors [...] c'est de déterminer quelle forme de relation peut être légitimement décrite entre ces différentes séries ; [...] de quel effet peuvent être les décalages, les temporalités différentes, les diverses rémanences ; dans quels ensembles distincts certains éléments peuvent figurer simultanément ; bref, non seulement quelles séries, mais quelles 'séries de séries' [...] il est possible de constituer.*²⁸

Enfin, cette théorie du film ou plutôt cette « histoire théorique » ne peut se passer des films, mieux, cette théorie invite à une histoire qui n'ignore pas ce qui se passe *dans* les films, et engage à une histoire se situant aux « frontières mouvantes des histoires du cinéma et de la forme filmique ».²⁹ Au fond, l'idée d'histoire du cinéma qui traverse mon intervention et qui y prévaut se situe-t-elle elle-même à un point de fracture ou juste de fissure, à la jonction exacte de l'histoire et de la théorie du film, aux frontières de l'histoire du cinéma.

Notes

¹ Mes remerciements à Laurent Guido pour ses commentaires et ses suggestions.

² Bruno Tackels, *Petite introduction à Walter Benjamin*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2001, p. 62.

³ *Idem*, p. 81.

⁴ Jean-Louis Leutrat, *Le Diptyque de Siegfried Kracauer*, dans Philippe Despoix, Peter Schöttler (sous la direction de), *Siegfried Kracauer penseur de l'histoire*, Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme - Presses de l'Université de Laval, Paris 2006, pp. 209-228.

⁵ Antoine de Baecque, « Jean-Luc Godard et la critique des temps de l'histoire », dans *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire*, Presses de Sciences Po, n° 117, janvier 2013, pp. 149-164 ; <http://www.cairn.info/revue-vingtieme-siecle-revue-d-histoire-2013-1-page-149.htm>.

Le Cinéma et l'histoire, deux « façons de penser » à part en vis-à-vis ?

- ⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris 1986, p. 30.
- ⁷ Siegfried Kracauer, *L'Histoire des avant-dernières choses*, Stock, Paris 2006, p. 89 et p. 114.
- ⁸ Id., *L'Approche photographique*, dans *Sur le seuil du temps. Essais sur la photographie*. Textes choisis et présentés par Philippe Despoix, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Montréal 2014, p. 76 (« The Photographic Approach », dans *Magazine of Art*, vol. 44, n° 3, 1951, pp. 107-113).
- ⁹ Siegfried Kracauer, *L'Histoire des avant-dernières choses*, cit., p. 105.
- ¹⁰ Idem, p. 69.
- ¹¹ Siegfried Kracauer, *Théorie du film*, Flammarion, Paris 2010, p. 44 et p. 45.
- ¹² Id., *L'Histoire des avant-dernières choses*, cit., p. 119. Comme Benjamin dans la septième thèse, où il prône un combat de tous les instants contre les plus tenaces présupposés de l'histoire, Kracauer précise : « Deuxièmement, le champ de l'histoire est encombré d'habitudes mentales héritées [de la science et de la philosophie traditionnelles] et de thèmes rebattus qui s'allient pour le rendre pratiquement impénétrable », p. 120.
- ¹³ Idem, p. 69.
- ¹⁴ François Hartog, *Évidence de l'histoire. Ce que voient les historiens*, Éditions de l'EHESS, Paris 2005, p. 232.
- ¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, *L'Œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproductibilité technique*, repris dans *Œuvres III*, Gallimard, Paris 2000, pp. 268-316.
- ¹⁶ Id., *Thèse III*, repris dans Michael Löwy, *Walter Benjamin : avertissement d'incendie. Une lecture des thèses « Sur le concept d'histoire »*, PUF, Paris 2001, p. 41.
- ¹⁷ Bruno Tackels, *Petite introduction à Walter Benjamin*, cit., p. 102 et p. 111.
- ¹⁸ Oscar Wilde, *Le Critique comme artiste*, Gallimard, Paris 1996, p. 837.
- ¹⁹ Siegfried Kracauer, *Théorie du film*, cit., p. 423.
- ²⁰ Jean Epstein, « Le Gros plan du son » [s.d., circa 1947] repris dans *Écrits sur le cinéma*, tome 2, cit., p. 109 et p. 113.
- ²¹ L'auteur parle d'une « indétermination que n'induit pas, mais que révèle et ne cesse de déployer la multiplicité des usages ou l'ubiquité photographique ». Carl Havelange, « Indéterminations de la photographie », posté le 1 juin 2010, sur : <http://culturevisuelle.org/cultureessensibles/>.
- ²² Siegfried Kracauer, *Théorie du film*, cit., pp. 330-331.
- ²³ Idem, p. 54. (Sur ce point, il prend ses distances avec la position quelque peu radicale de Proust qui postule l'*étrangeté* de la photographie. J'ajouterai que le terme de *fissures* est celui qu'utilise Kracauer dans *Theory of film*).
- ²⁴ Idem, p. 161 et p. 196.
- ²⁵ Idem, p. 189.
- ²⁶ Idem, pp. 358-359.
- ²⁷ Siegfried Kracauer, « L'Approche photographique », cit., p. 81.
- ²⁸ Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir*, Gallimard, Paris 1969, pp. 18-19.
- ²⁹ Édouard Arnoldy, « French Cancan et le spectateur mobile », dans *CiNeMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 12, n° 3, 2002, p. 13.

Toward a Media Archaeology of Inscription, Experience and Temporality

The stated theme of the XXI Udine Film Studies conference, subtitled "Temporality, Archaeology, Theories" reminds us that media archaeology is "a methodological hypothesis." This statement suggests a responsibility to theorize history and historicize theory. The argument of this essay keeps both these perspectives in mind in order to begin formulating a contemporary understanding of the term "inscription." Theorizing history involved theorizing how we *write* history (historiography) and how the inscription of the welter of historical events is given narrative form through writing and images. The "new film history" and the method of media archaeology in turn historicized the theorization of film history. By revisiting early film history, including that of audiences, and the wider spectrum of adjacent technologies, practices and experiences, enriching an understanding of inscription in the history of film, and film theory. For the purposes of this essay, this general attention to inscription will be developed and expanded by revisiting *cinematic experience* from a contemporary perspective. How can the term "inscription," which is central to history-writing and media archaeology, be rethought through an investigation of contemporary experience? How can terms such as "writing," and "suture," so crucial to the study of both historiography and film analysis, be productively reoriented towards an analysis of contemporary media experience? And could such a reorientation from the perspective of experience provide some pointers to expanding the insights of media archaeology and film history? These are some of the central questions which will drive the essay's centralization of experience in thinking inscription, film history and media archaeology. These questions will be addressed through three concepts: intermittent experience, volatile publics and embodied mobility.

Hayden White's theorization of history was primarily historiographical – that is, the graphing of history as inscription, and the rhetorical modes through which the welter of historical events, and indeed the status of events, were given form by strategies of writing.¹ The predominant form in which this inscription strategy was executed was narrative. White's rhetorical analysis of historiography had methodological implications for the "new film history." It eschewed the teleological temptation of identifying central "moments," technologies and

desires as points in the unfolding of what was to become cinema. Narrative origins and narrative closure splintered into multiple narratives, where depending on whether one began with radio, the telephone or the amusement park for example, alternative histories of cinema could be written. This was not just a postmodern pluralism of endless little narratives, but an enriching of the field of film studies, since it highlighted dimensions of cinema's history previously ignored such as the specific experiences of modernity by working-class audiences, the overlaps between popular cultural experiences (the amusement park) and the cinema, or between technologies of war and film technology.

As for historicizing theory, my argument entails noting at least two disciplinary instances of the politics of inscription. White's interventions took place amid the rising post-structuralist analysis of language, and the elevation of the linguistic paradigm as a trans-disciplinary perspective. This moment, which belongs to the 1980s and early 1990s has been increasingly replaced by a more technologically-focussed (some would say fetishized) understanding of writing by machines as the primary mode of approaching media history. This development can be seen for example in the work of Wolfgang Ernst where media archaeology becomes "media archaeography."² Mary Ann Doane's *The Emergence of Cinematic Time* provided an extremely thought-provoking constellation of these different forms of inscription in her analyses, for example, of Freud's "Mystic Writing Pad" and Marey's chronophotography.³ Her analyses sees these as different forms of writing machines which wrote time, and in that writing marked both the increasing contingency and thrust toward homogenization of time in modernity from the late 19th century. Doane's attention to inscription is not limited to a linguistic paradigm or tropological analysis but an archaeological analysis of the lateral relations between different fields where time's inscription were stabilized in their fluidity. Temporality then, taken from these perspectives (White's tropology, Doane's analysis of graphology, Ernst's machine-based media archaeography), provide a sketch of both a theorization of history as inscription, and a historicization of language as inscription from linguistic determinism to generalized writing as marking and recording. These interventions were, and are crucial at certain moments in history. White's intervention had its place in an ongoing dynamic which Peter Osborne in *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant Garde* describes thus:

Modernity is a form of historical time which valorizes the new as the product of a constantly self-negating temporal dynamic. Yet its abstract temporal form remains open to a variety of competing articulations. In particular, by producing the old as remorselessly as it produces the new, and in equal measure, it provokes forms of traditionalism the temporal logic of which is quite different from that traditionalism as conventionally received.⁴

One could argue that media archaeology emerged precisely within this conceptual maelstrom where the new and the old lost their temporal coordinates because the valorization of the new (even the "New Film History") went hand in hand with producing strange forms of the old (old devices leapfrogging cinema and becoming new media *avant la lettre*).

Peter Osborne's claim that "a logic of historical totalization [modernism, postmodernism]... raises questions about the nature of historical time itself"⁵ becomes relevant here. What questions? "Modernity is a culture of time,"⁶ he argues, referring to how Baudelaire, Aragon and others saw the experience of time, or time consciousness as central to both modernity and their medial inscriptions of it. What sort of "temporality [is] implicit in, or proper to, the use of modernity as a periodizing category"?⁷ Reviewing Marshall Berman's intervention in *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, Osborne asks "what form of temporality is at stake in the use of 'modernity' as a category [...] Or, more directly, what *kind of time* does 'modernity' inscribe?"⁸ One of Osborne's three concerns is "a quality of social experience."⁹ Osborne quotes Adorno here: "Modernity is a qualitative category, not a chronological, category."¹⁰ Put more generously, one could say the experiential dimensions of moder-

nity include chronology and inscriptions of time as part of a much more configured complex of sense perception and a general phenomenology of embodied experience. The present here as Now Time, means not a gap in time "the elimination of historical present" but as "a gap of time."¹¹ Media archaeology in this sense means the exploitation of time as gap, as the gap where the investigation of the *qualitative experience of temporality* can be engaged with in its embodied form. It is in this sense that I redirect questions of inscription of time into questions of temporal experience as gap as to be explored for their phenomenological density within screen environments today.

My interest is how these historical moments of the critique of historiography can be turned toward an understanding of historical experience – that is, not history as inscription but the *experience of time within history*. As I will show later, inscription has its place in this experiential understanding of temporality, albeit in a transformed sense.

From classical film suture to multi-mediated knitting

Inscription as emplacement was developed in the Ur-text on suture by Jean-Pierre Oudart as the precise alignment between the cinematic image on the one hand, and the transition from the empirical viewer to the ideal spectator.¹² The construction of film through editing inscribed the position of the ideal spectator thus writing it into a specific and assigned position. This theory of inscription through suture was also part of the inscription of *film* history which fed into the narrativization from early "primitive" film to classical narrative cinema. The crucial texts of media archaeology, particularly around early cinema seriously undermined this temporally-inscribed construction of the ideal spectator. What Daniel Dayan, inspired by Oudart called the "Tutor mode of production"¹³ was temporally and spatially dispersed through pioneering works on the cinema of attractions, the spaces of exhibition, the ethnography of audiences and archival work on what we would call today "playlists" of exhibition. In the wake of this dispersion, Thomas Elsaesser a decade ago, in reviewing the insights New Film History offered, suggested

it is now possible to envisage the historical conditions in which other forms of "netting" or "knitting" sounds and images, with other architectures of space and other grammatologies of time, take over the tasks which have been (some would say: efficiently; others have argued: stultifyingly) fulfilled by narrative. The moving image would thus "emancipate" itself from narrative, as it has been claimed by the avant-gardes in the 1960s and 1970s (under the label "structuralist-materialist film") and by the digital media in the 1980s and 1990s (as "interactivity" and "virtual reality").¹⁴

The "historical conditions" Elsaesser refers to, are what I call the gap of time in the present, where the temporality of experience can be studied. The experiential dimensions of the netting or knitting of sounds and images in the present is how I rotate "inscription" from White, Doane and others' analyses. The peculiar temporality by which narrative in film has itself been narrativized is an index of the complexity of understanding temporal consciousness. Elsaesser's call for understanding "other forms of 'netting' or 'knitting' sounds and images" is central to how I want to transform the understanding of inscription towards experience. That is, how do new technologies and forms of temporal experience mediated and produced by them, inscribe us and knit us into different qualitative textures of time consciousness?

Modernity as the "quality of social experience" was the object of Osborne's philosophical discussion. Miriam Hansen's *Cinema and Experience* fleshes out for Film History a mode of understanding the knitting/netting of sound and image, including the digital image today.¹⁵ Her deployment of Critical theory (Kracauer, Benjamin,

Adorno) is one way of approaching an answer to this crucial question Elsaesser posed as relevant for New Film History:

*Does the digital image constitute a radical break in the (Western) culture of imaging, or is it merely a technological continuation of a long and complex history of mechanical vision, following a historical logic (of "improvement," adaptation, emulation and remediation) which traditional film theory has not yet fully encompassed?... have we been concentrating on films as texts, and neglected the cinema as event and experience?*¹⁶

While acknowledging the important of textual form, my argument will also explore how the text-technology-public nexus provides a more nuanced and experiential understanding of cinematic experience. The reorientation of inscription in this essay is precisely directed towards the multiple forms of "events" and the very specific "experiences" that Elsaesser suggests have been neglected in the focus on the image. These events and experiences are surely cinematic or multi-medial, but they are also linked to the qualitative experiences of time in general, in specific historical conjunctures. And that is why Hansen's deployment of Critical Theory is particularly relevant today in asking how cinema relates to experience. The copula "and" in Hansen's *Cinema and Experience* is significant, for it does not refer to a *kind* of experience (cinematic experience) but a relational nexus of cinema and experience in modernity, i.e. the specifics of cinema and the experience of modernity are related to each other. This relationality helps one think film as event and experience, where textuality as inscription is but one element in the netting/knitting process. In her readings of Kracauer, Benjamin and Adorno, Hansen equates the specific quality of time consciousness with the writing strategies of these theorists, where time-consciousness precludes narrativization (White's focus) and requires what Hansen calls "more literary styles of critical writing – marked by images, metaphors, wordplay, paradox, acrobatic sentence structures."¹⁷

Intermittent experience

Hansen argued in her reading of critical theory that "they [Kracauer, Benjamin, Adorno] were more interested in what cinema *does*, the kind of sensory-perceptual, mimetic experience it enabled" to construct an "evolving phenomenology of modernity."¹⁸ Osborne's "quality of social experience in modernity" becomes here a phenomenology of modernity occasioned by the embodied, perceptual transformations precipitated by cinema. How can this more general attention to a phenomenology of modernity be related to specific arguments around cinematic experience? Comparing Tom Gunning's "aesthetic of astonishment" in early cinema to Michael Fried's arguments around painting, Robert Rushton had argued that the parsing of cinema into "narrative" and "attractions," and its concomitant experience of absorption and theatricality needed to be undone.¹⁹ Rushton rightly suggested a sort of "template" of the mixed temporal experience of cinema as absorption in narrative as much as in spectacle. In other words, the spectator could be absorbed as much in the unfolding of spectacle as in that of narrative. More importantly, as I shall show later, spectacle often is deployed precisely to *intensify the narrative experience*.

The temporality of continuity and coherence (Benjamin's *Erfahrung*), and the temporality of the instant (Dadaist shock to multimedia sensory intensity, *Erlebnis*) coexist in a mixed time of the now. From Oudart's Absent One to someone, we arrive not at a categorical distinction between the absorbed and the assaulted spectator, but the temporal experience of their combination. This combination of absorption and theatricality, narrative and spectacle marks the intermittent quality of cinematic experience. This combinatory experience lifted out of and reworked from film history returns us back to Kracauer's experiential reading of Griffith's *Intolerance*, which as Hansen argued was a practice "indifferent to the narrative design of Griffith's film" where

"action below the action allows viewers to get sidetracked by details or wander to the margins and corners of the screen, or to commit to memory transient, contingent images."²⁰ In other words, by moving between film analysis of spectatorship (Oudart, Rushton), early film history (Kracauer on Griffith) and theorizations of experience in modernity (Benjamin), the phenomenological density of cinematic experience does not involve suturing, but a to-and-fro between *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis*, narrative absorption and aimless wandering, the moment of shock and the seamless experience of continuity. This mixed modality of phenomenological time-experience develops what Elsaesser calls the "knitting" of sound and image in "architectures of space" and "grammatologies of time." The discussion of intermittent experience here is limited to the textual experience.

In the broader temporal experience of today's multi-medial world, the viewer's "action" is often not just "allowed," but actively *solicited* where home computing, digital tools, and circulation platforms, encourage indifference to narrative (even while producing it), not just committing to memory but actively producing, altering, storing and circulating images from narratives. The contingent becomes permanent, one narrative produces others, or interrupts them in today's digital media. Sensory perception as the experiential density of practices of viewing, scanning, databasing and accessing, rotate the cinema of attractions as one part of a complex nexus where theatricality and absorption, the instant and the present continuous, and the narrative and the event combine in specific configurations. Such an understanding of experience moves us through textual form to the broader *practices of engagement* with texts. Leon Gurevitch's term "the cinema of transactions" is one example of precisely this densely knotted temporal experience.²¹

Computer-generated imagery (CGI) produces intense sensory assaults at the same time that it *further* narrative. For example, Alfonso Cuarón, the director of *Gravity* highlights the hi-tech use of NASA aeronautic imaging in the construction of images for his film as an "immersive experience," while immediately emphasizing that these disorienting special effects are crucially deployed for the *narrative unfolding* of the film.²² Through publicity on Youtube and short interviews circulated on digital platforms, the film *Gravity* becomes a tool of transaction in advertizing (IMAX) not the narrative but the sensory experience of the film. This fragmentation of the text is also a transformation where the film as a discrete object (narrative) is dispersed across different media platforms. This dispersal further diversifies *the modes of sensorial experience* of the "film" which becomes both an absorptive narrative, a sensorially-intense series of spectacles, an advertising clip for NASA/IMAX, and an instance of self-promotion for the "auteur" Cuarón. Here, the architecture of space and the grammatology of time gets concretized in far more complex ways which help think inscription precisely as the knitting together of corporate logics, media objects, embodied spectators, authorial self-promotion and morphing texts.

The "narrative" of film history when understood in such experiential and evental perspectives reorients inscription towards a series of specific sensorial experiences depending on which text we encounter, on what platform, through what combination of absorption and theatricality. This experiential understanding of the "knitting" of experience enables an archaeological approach to deploy the insights of early film history, the analyses of spectatorship, the contemporary landscape of corporate production and the proliferation of media objects through which "cinema" and film history can be conceptualized.

Volatile publics

The "public" of cinema is not Oudart's "Ideal Spectator" but the spectator in the cinema, at home watching a DVD, the computer user, the mobile phone wielder and a host of other figures. The actors in this evolving phenomenology posed important questions of what "the public" could mean. Hansen's recourse to Negt and

Kluge's notion of "the social horizon of experience"²³ dynamizes experience and makes it relevant for rapidly changing and overlapping publics. Hansen argues:

*Negt and Kluge's insistence on the mixed, conjunctural, rapidly forming and disintegrating character of contemporary public spheres is remarkably prescient as I am trying to understand the transformations of publicness and experience in the digitally based media environment – and the implications for cinema, film theory and film history.*²⁴

Returning to experience as *Erfahrung*, Hansen reminds us that one of the etymological roots of the word is *Fahren*, that is, "riding, journeying, cruising."²⁵ If we understand the volatile public as the conjunctural coalescence of collectivities, the temporal moment of this conjuncture where bodies in movement conjoin, the peculiar temporality of this phenomenon is indicative of the practices of a digitally based media environment. By this I mean both the technologies and logics of corporations, as well as the solicited and unsolicited activities these provoke around the momentarily coalescing "publics."

The mystery around Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 is one of many cases in point. The disappearance of the airplane provided the classic example of an origin as problem, that sets a narrative going. But in this case, the proliferation of often competing information where every new addition could not be ascertained as relevant or not produced a whole series of shifting collectivities from passively absorbed viewing publics to actively solicited armchair and mouse-clicking amateur investigators. The roaming "public" that grazed on multiple platforms for news stumbled consistently on blockages, and moments of incomprehension captured in the word "if" or more precisely the words "only if A" then "B." This experiential start/stop dimension of media interactivity resulted from a conflict between two logics: on the one hand, a database logic where fragments of information are offered and accessible but a narrative is missing; on the other hand, this logic makes possible narratives which judder to a halt precisely because the data in the database can be potentially networked with any other to produce another narrative. And all this took place precisely because multiple media technologies from live satellite feeds, news broadcasts, computer imagery and interactive software provided the technological conditions for different forms of space-time experience. The public, and largely media-fuelled, unrest around conflicting information rested on the *impossibility* of constructing a credible "narrative" of events. Image and text circulated on TV screens and on the Web in great profusion where a "public-service" perspective of informing the public was accompanied by direct appeals for participation in the hunt for MH370.

Tara McPherson's notion of "volitional mobility," which she perhaps too optimistically saw as a form of audience agency, needs to be placed next to "public volatility."²⁶ The "Scan-and-Search" practices of publics are not just volitional, and not just inscribed by corporate algorithmic code. They are both directed-and-participatory forms of temporal experience. The BBC's headline "Armchair aeroplane hunters head online"²⁷ captures this temporal experience, where scan-and-search was concretized through the apportioning of segments of satellite-imaged areas of the Indian Ocean and offered per person to "the public" to scan on their own computers for searching for objects in the water. This composite public-function returns us to the logic (not the practice) of Situationist experiments in *dérive* and Kracauer's cinema in the head. Action below the action in the reading of film, the negotiation of urban space and the construction and accessing of data produce alternative trajectories for different forms of "publics" which form at specific moments. In this sense, instead of a stable public for a specific media form such as film, one could talk of "public-functions" produced by a specific nexus of solicitation, textuality and technology. As Miriam Hansen argued:

*Conceptualizing the public [is] a mixture of competing modes of organizing social experience [...] thinking of it as a potentially volatile process, defined by different speeds and temporal markers. In the conjunctural dynamics of this process [...] moments of historical indeterminacy [emerge] [...] change becomes conceivable.*²⁸

Understanding how publics are produced in all their volatility, I argue, is crucial in the digitally-mediated world of sound and images today. This production of volatile publics helps think of collectivities and spectatorship beyond either the narrow frames of the spectator sutured into time/space, and enables writing a film history precisely from the point of view of speed, coalescence and obsolescence of the figure of the "viewing public."

Embodied mobility

The notion of suture both called up and then erased the embodied practices of spectatorship, as was evident in Oudart's transition from the real viewer to the ideal spectator. However, as Jonathan Crary's pioneering Foucauldian work on "the Observer" has pointed out, the relationship between the spectator and technology was always a problem rather than a given in the 19th century.²⁹ Comparing the camera obscura to the stereoscope, Crary clearly showed how visuality was linked to managing and controlling the body. Embodied vision, in other words, problematized any stable understandings of the image and of the processes of seeing. This relationship between the unstable body of the viewer that has to be controlled (stereoscope) on the one hand, and the image on the other, can then be expanded to the earlier discussion of narrative and spectacle, so-called "classical" and early cinema. In that discussion, early cinema rightly was seen as confrontational and frontal, not so much about suturing the ideal spectator into the diegesis but assaulting the spectator's body in a complex game of knowingness and naivety, a mixed modality which Gunning called "an aesthetic of astonishment." A historical look at cinematic experience from these two perspectives suggests an unstable body to be controlled (Crary) and a mixed body that is both absented and assaulted viscerally. Further, what Kracauer called "porous, permeable, open-ended forms such as the episode film and the found story" produced narratives that "leave gaps into which environmental life may stream."³⁰ The study of found films, short films, and episode films have highlighted that the bodily experience of these forms of non-long narrative films comes closer to a fragmented and much more episodic embodied experience of spectatorship. Cinema's modes of exhibition and reception worked "beyond/below the 'intersubjective protocols' and particular kinds of knowledge that govern our understanding of narratives."³¹ Narrative as temporal coherence within the time of spectatorship took place in the space of exhibition. What happens when the space is set in motion and the body's place rendered indeterminate? And what are its temporal dimensions?

My expansion of inscription towards experience takes these insights and expands them towards contemporary forms of embodied mobility. A media-archaeological approach would rightly insist that embodied mobility does not become an issue only now, due to mobile technologies like the iPad, laptop or iPhone. The different modes of exhibition of images throughout history from World Fairs to vaudeville to the cinema already emphasize that not all experience of images was based on a static body. However, the challenge today is two-fold. Firstly, the morphing of images and their templating across different platforms means we need not assume the same text simply proliferates across different devices. What Max Dawson calls "the hardware aesthetic," where texts are pre-constructed so that they can be reworked for different media objects (TV screen or mobile telephone, TV episode or webisode), is an example of how mobility now implies not just moving bodies but mobile *and morphing* texts.³² Secondly, the increasing use of "bodyware," spurred on lately by the "intelligent" wristwatch, requires a broadening of *what* kind of images/data the body is engaged with. GoogleGlass and the Sony SmartWatch2 become the latest forms of what Adam Greenfield calls "everyware" not limited only to physical screens.³³ The volatilization of screens and wearable digital-processing objects converts "everyware" into "everybodyware," i.e. the phenomenological density of temporal experience in real time has changed toward reading, scanning, calculating and visualizing with the moving body, often in a heavily corporatized and client-

targetted media environment. Embodied mobility then does not only mean watching images on the move, but bodies processing, locating, navigating and viewing images and data. *Both* these dimensions – morphing mobile images and processing spectating bodies – must be factored into how we understand the experiential dimensions of mediated modernity.

In the critical spirit of a media archaeological perspective, it is important to point out that moving bodies and morphing images are not a new phenomenon enabled only now by digital technology. While these technologies make more literal the two dimensions elaborated on above, this relation between image transformation and bodily movement was part of the concerns of literature precisely in the period where modernity was taking hold. Embodied mobility as *the accompaniment of bodies with images* was captured in the famous scene snapped by Proust. Moving toward Normandy in the train, the young narrator looks forward to the famous church in Balbec. His moving body transported by a steam train is accompanied by images of expectation of what the church would look like, which clash with the actual church he encounters in Balbec. In actual time, the real image and the virtual one failed to coincide. This experiential dimension of the overlap and gap between images whether actual, real or virtual,³⁴ accelerated during the period of modernity – it is no accident that it is in the moving train that Marcel has images of the church. The body is accompanied by images, the images absorb the body, and this complex accompaniment of body with image in the novel prefigures the complex time-space architectures we inhabit today as spectating and processing bodies.

Further, the identity of the body cannot be separated from the relation to images, a point which is crucial for film studies and media history. “Marcel’s identity is given to him,” argues Leo Bersani, “in a series of pictures, but as in space, there are gaps between the pictures, areas of emptiness.”³⁵ The body does not “ground” an identity, but the interaction between morphing images and moving bodies is part of the process through which subjectivity is experienced. This understanding of the subject takes us far from the ideal spectator towards a far more supple, concrete and historically-specific understanding of how space, time and image are knitted together.

Conclusion

Sensory perception in the time of the now comprises mixed modalities. Firstly, the experiential dimensions of modernity and of cinema, as Hansen has argued, further an understanding of the complex ways that narrative absorption and aimless wandering, the juddering shocks of the instant and the smooth flow of continuous time, mark a hybrid experience of time-consciousness. This complex of different forms of sensory experience, in their mixture and hybridity, what I term “intermittent experience,” can be one starting point for expanding the notion of “inscription.” The experiential dimensions of complex time-consciousness are the general field on which must be mapped different ways that media technologies, bodies and sounds and images are knitted together (Elsaesser). Secondly, the term “volatile publics” expands the notion of audience so central to film studies, and moves toward understanding the complex dynamic of conjunctural “meetings” from crowd-sourcing and flash mobs to more dispersed engagements with sounds and images spread across multiple media platforms. This second term then helps to concretize and give density to the mixed modalities of time-consciousness. Lastly, “embodied mobilities” plots the shifting figures of the embodied spectator as it transforms into a number of different avatars: from the data-processing wearer of navigational tools, to the viewer of traditional film narratives on an iPad in a train to the consumer/producer of morphing textualities dispersed across different screens. These three experiential dimensions construct something like a research pathway where the knitting/netting of architectures of space and grammatologies of time may be plotted.

Notes

- ¹ Hayden White, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory," in *History and Theory*, vol. 23, no. 1, February 1984, pp. 1-33.
- ² Wolfgang Ernst, *Media Archaeography: Method & Machine versus History & Narrative in Media History*, in Erkki Huhtamo, Jussi Parikka (eds.), *Media Archaeology*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2011, pp. 239-255.
- ³ Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2003.
- ⁴ Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant Garde*, Verso, London 2010, p. XII.
- ⁵ *Idem*, p. VIII.
- ⁶ *Idem*, p. X.
- ⁷ *Idem*, p. 1.
- ⁸ *Idem*, pp. 4-5.
- ⁹ *Idem*, p. 5.
- ¹⁰ *Idem*, p. 9.
- ¹¹ *Idem*, p. 14.
- ¹² Jean-Pierre Oudart, "Cinema and Suture," in *Screen*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1978, pp. 35-47.
- ¹³ Daniel Dayan, "The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema," in *Film Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 1, Autumn 1974, pp. 22-31.
- ¹⁴ Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archaeology," in *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 14, nos. 2-3, 2004, p. 111.
- ¹⁵ Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2012.
- ¹⁶ Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archaeology," cit., p. 77.
- ¹⁷ Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, cit., p. XVI.
- ¹⁸ *Idem*, p. XVII.
- ¹⁹ Robert Rushton, "Early, Classical and Modern Cinema: Theatricality and Absorption," in *Screen*, vol. 45, no. 3, Autumn 2004, pp. 226-244. See also Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)credulous Spectator," in *Art and Text*, vol. 34, Spring 1989, pp. 31-45, and Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 1989.
- ²⁰ Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, cit., p. 276.
- ²¹ Leon Gurevitch, "The Cinema of Transactions: The Exchangeable Currency of the Digital Attraction," in *Television and New Media*, vol. 11, no. 5, 2010, pp. 367-385.
- ²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39w4Ow5QDGQ>, last visit 13 October 2014.
- ²³ Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, cit., p. XIV.
- ²⁴ *Ibidem*.
- ²⁵ *Ibidem*.
- ²⁶ Tara McPherson, *Reload: Liveness, Mobility and the Web*, in Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Thomas Keenan (eds.), *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, Routledge, London-New York 2006, pp. 199-208.
- ²⁷ <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-25051663>, last visit 23 March 2014.
- ²⁸ Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, cit., p. 205.

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²⁹ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1992.

³⁰ Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1997, p. 255, quoted in Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, cit., p. 276.

³¹ Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, cit., p. 277.

³² Max Dawson, "Little Players, Big Shows: Format, Narration, and Style on Television's New Small Screens," in *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2007, pp. 231-250.

³³ Adam Greenfield, *Everyware: The Dawning Age of Ubiquitous Computing*, New Riders Press, Berkeley 2006.

³⁴ Jason Forman, *Mobile Interface Theory: Embodied Space and Locative Media*, Routledge, London-New York 2012, p. 22 provides a succinct account of actual, real and virtual images.

³⁵ Leo Bersani, *Marcel Proust: The Fictions of Life and Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 2013, p. 34.

Montage as Allegory: On the Concept of "Historical Truth" in Walter Benjamin and Guy Debord

Whether the truth of history can become an object of knowledge or it is bound to be lost forever is the crucial question that defines the field of inquiry that has been called "philosophy of history." Doubts about the historian's ability to offer an authentic representation of the past through a work of reconstruction have haunted the field since the publication in 1874 of the second of Nietzsche's "Untimely meditations," *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*. Nietzsche's text situates itself at the beginning of an intellectual genealogy that has called into question the applicability of a scientific method of research to history.

The scientification of historical research is denounced by Nietzsche as plain historicism, a blind and obsessive faith in the possibility that the past can be known "the way it really was." The unproblematic approach of the positivistic school of Wilhelm von Humboldt, Leopold von Ranke and others has remained an obvious target in the critical debate on the method of historiography, as have been the typical evolutionary simplifications that have characterised the development of hegelo-marxism in the line of historical determinism.

Nietzsche's suspicions about scientific historiography are echoed in one of Walter Benjamin's most famous essays, *On the Concept of History* (1940). Here Benjamin develops a compelling critique of the "additive method" employed by positivist historians, whose concept of history amounts to mustering "a mass of data to fill the homogeneous, empty time" of the past.¹ Benjamin is careful to clarify that a similar evolutionary vision also informs the concept of history of orthodox Marxism since the advent of the Second International and the rise of the social-democratic ideology. A vision, to make it short, where the target of universal emancipation is seen as a kind of inevitable happy ending resulting from the march of progress.

Differently from Nietzsche, though, Benjamin does not refute the idea that there is something like an actual "truth of history." Yet he doesn't show any confidence in the scientific stance of positivistic Marxism and its unabashed faith in the emancipatory power of progress. On the contrary, he presents us with a paradoxical solution in which the impossibility "to know the past the way it really was" coexists with the possibility to grasp what he calls "the true image of the past."²

Benjamin's concept of history is of particular consequence for film studies since it implies a theory of montage that has its roots in his interest for allegory, as well as for the cinema of the Russian avant-garde. His recourse to film theory to propose an alternative historiographical method is not isolated in the field of the critics of historicism. Jean-Luc Godard, himself a proponent of a "true history of cinema,"³ gathered a whole collection of such figures in his monumental *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998), where he draws a cinematographic constellation between such apparently unrelated figures as Walter Benjamin, André Malraux, Elie Faure, Serge Daney, and Guy Debord.⁴ Of these, it is mostly Debord who goes further in the direction of a practical employ of film theory to produce an alternative historiographical method. We need to keep in mind that the notion of "true" in Debord is never offered in isolation from that of "false," which in his system comes first in logical terms.⁵ Yet of course the struggle against the falsity of the spectacle, that is, the capital in its newest modern version, implies truth, and specifically the truth of history, as the stakes of cultural and political subversion, much as in the case of Benjamin's concept of history.

The crucial point where Benjamin's and Debord's specific approaches can be seen to converge is also a premise of feminist historiography, something that comes as an obvious observation at the beginning of any research in women's history: the simple verification that history is a production of the winners, whose principal aim is the deletion of the losers' memory. As Benjamin puts it, "there is no document of culture that is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is never free of barbarism, so barbarism taints the manner in which it was transmitted from one hand to another."⁶ Similarly Debord observes that "The owners of history have given time a *direction*, a direction which is also a *meaning*."⁷ Debord's account of the history of modernity as a history of separation – and, more precisely, as the history of the separation of history from the living experience of time – is another way to express Benjamin's own concern with a historiographic style that postulate the existence of an unbridgeable gap between past and present. As in the Zeno's paradoxes, when time is viewed as a kind of spatial continuum, the distance between any two instants of time can be divided to infinity, in such a way that it can be infinitely filled with an increasing mass of information. This creates a kind of historical narration marked by irreducible extraneity and separation with respect to the present observer, or spectator of history. "The ruling class," Debord states, "is forced to link its fate with the preservation of this reified history, that is, with the preservation of a new immobility *within history*."⁸

Therefore, the question of how to produce history from the point of view of the marginals, the subalterns, the oppressed, and the rebels, depends on our ability to espouse another concept of time, one where past and present can be seen as somehow coexistent. Benjamin calls this the *Jetztzeit*, or the "time of now,"⁹ a formulation that again resonates powerfully in Debord's summon for a "social appropriation"¹⁰ of history in everyday life. There is no trace of a knowledge of Benjamin in Debord's archive, but there are several moments in his writings where he seems to rehearse even specific words of Benjamin's own vocabulary. For instance, in the chapter "Time and history" of *Society of the Spectacle*, there is a literal French rendition (*toujours nouveau*) of one of Benjamin's most typical wordings (the "ever-new" that doubles and repeats the "ever-same"), where we read: "What is constantly new [*toujours nouveau*] in the process of production of things is not found in consumption, which remains the expanded repetition of the same. In spectacular time, since dead labour continues to dominate living labor, the past dominates the present."¹¹

There is no need to assume Debord had read Benjamin to explain the resemblance between their two respective versions of anti-historicism. It suffices to say that both theories step out as critical reactions to traditional Marxism, put forward in the interest of a superior fidelity to Marx. In both cases, the goal to provide a whole new, unorthodox reading of Marx is pursued through a couple of similar moves: on the one hand, the assumption of the theory of commodity fetishism exposed in the first chapter of *The Capital* (traditionally the most neglected part of Marx's work)¹² as a central source of inspiration; on the other, the use of complex discursive

strategies to incorporate specific idealistic elements into the materialistic weave of their philosophies. For Benjamin, the platonic notion of *eidos*, or idea, is key in the formulation of his theory of allegory and constellations; for Debord Hegel's reflections on time play a central role in his further radicalization of Marx's concept of history. A major difference that is worth to be noted, however, is the important role that messianism plays in Benjamin, which doesn't have any comparison in Debord.

What are then the conditions at which the past can be experienced in its true image? We have already ruled out the possibility that the past can be known the way it was. But then, how could ever be possible to achieve something like its true image?

Both the German and the French critic agree that the experience of historical truth is totally dependant on its singularity. "Historicism," Benjamin writes, "offers the 'eternal' image of the past; historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past."¹³ And most famously: "The true image of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image that flashes up at the moment of its recognizability and is never seen again."¹⁴ In other words the experience of historical truth is a purely auratic experience, "a unique weave of time and space," as the aura is defined in the essay on photography.¹⁵ Now, it is interesting to observe that, even without discussing this topic in explicit terms, Debord did actually assume the question of the aura – and its immediate correlate, reproducibility – as a central issue of his theory. The post-dadaist, namely Lettrist, theme and practice of dismembering the film, of making films only as pretexts for live events meant to celebrate the ritual destruction of cinema itself, is just the first step in a movement that leads to the operative notion of *constructed situation*, explained as a unique interplay of events collectively experienced in a specific time and space.¹⁶

*The dry, unexplained chronology which a deified authority offered to its subjects and which was intended to be understood solely as the earthly execution of the commandments of myth, was destined to be transcended and to become conscious history. But for this to happen, sizable groups of people had first to experience real participation in history. From such practical communication between those who had recognized each other as possessors of a unique present, who have experienced a qualitative richness of events as their own activity, their own dwelling-place – in short their epoch – from such communication arose the general language of historical communication.*¹⁷

Reading *situations* with Benjaminian eyes allows us to clearly see that they are geared "to blast open the continuum of history"¹⁸ so as to let the *Jetztzeit* appear. It is yet on the level of the historiographic method that we have to understand the consequences of this call to disrupt the false perception of a continuum. The decisive move here is the difference made by Benjamin between historical "facts" and historical "objects." While past facts and events have no factual existence in the present, historical objects are the physical remnants of the past. The problem then emerges of how to convey an experience of events that have long past their time that cannot be reanimated and are lost forever. I would say that here lies the border that divides two very different lines of anti-historicist thought: on the one hand the proponents of meta-history and all the different variations on the theme of history as relativistic narration,¹⁹ on the other Benjamin, and – I am proposing – Debord, with a quite different vision of the truth of history as the product of an evocation, summoned by the historian by conjuring and connecting a host of historical objects according to an implicit structure. Whereas historicism is described as a method simply aimed to fill the virtual continuum with fabricated narrations of past events, the task of the materialist historian is presented as a work of *détournement* and montage of historical objects "blasted out of the homogenous course of history."

Further analogies emerge when one compares Benjamin's description of his own practice of allegorical quotation to Debord's definition of *détournement*.

Benjamin:

*The historical materialist approaches a historical object only when it confronts him as a monad. In this structure he recognizes the sign of a messianic arrest of happening, or (to put it differently) a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past. He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history; thus he blasts a specific life out of the era, a specific work out of the lifework. As a result of this method the lifework is both preserved and sublated in the work, and the entire course of history in the era. The nourishing fruit of what is historically understood contains time in its interior as a precious but tasteless seed.*²⁰

Debord:

*Détournement is [...] a fragment torn away from its own context, from its own movement, and ultimately from the overall frame of reference of its period and from the precise option that it constituted within that framework. Détournement, by contrast, is the fluid language of anti-ideology. It occurs within a type of communication aware of its inability to enshrine any inherent and definitive certainty. That language is inaccessible in the highest degree to confirmation by any earlier or supra-critical reference. On the contrary, its internal coherence and its adequacy in respect of the practically possible are what validate the ancient kernel of truth that it restore.*²¹

There are actually many analogies that could be traced between the “monadological” method adopted by Benjamin in the *Arcades* project²² and the practice of *détournement* proposed by Debord. Especially the recent Italian edition of this monumental as well as unfortunate work, published under Giorgio Agamben’s direction, has made manifest the degree to which Benjamin’s use – or even better: his unprecedented way of re-use – of historical sources has very little to do with traditional forms of quotation.²³ Not only the volume rearranges the fragments according to a precise line of montage drawn by the author’s own notes, but it discloses for the first time the brief titles that Benjamin had devised for each of the fragments. Very often, the titles work as brilliant examples of *détournements*, transforming the meaning of what follows and producing through the contrast of past and present something like a new image. To rehearse Debord’s own words, far from appealing to “a theoretical authority inevitably tainted if only because it has become quotable”²⁴ Benjamin’s monads are, just like the materials *détournés* by Debord, historical objects “used to make new combinations,” in order to achieve the “organization of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect.”²⁵

A second point of convergence between Benjamin’s and Debord’s concepts of history is their common assumption of a conflicting, Eisensteinian dimension in their theories of montage. Benjamin’s dialectical image – another phrasing for the “true image of the past” – is described as a clash between the past and the present, and as such it is imported in the *Arcades* project to play the methodological part of the work.²⁶ Debord, on the other hand, explicitly refers to Eisenstein’s theory of the montage of attractions in several places with regard to his film projects.²⁷ Indeed, films like *Society of the Spectacle* (1973) and *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (1978) share the same allegorical technique of composition that we find in both Eisenstein and Benjamin.

The third point of convergence between the two authors is the important connection they create between history and autobiography. Short of space, I will leave the case of Benjamin for another situation.²⁸ It will be more interesting here to go a little deeper in the issue of Debord as a historian, and specifically, as a materialist historian. This is far from obvious, since, differently from Benjamin, Debord never proposed his theory as a model for the historian, and indeed, his concerns in 1968 were to be very different from those of Benjamin in 1940. Nonetheless, there is a point in *In girum* where he compares his film to a number of traditionally marginalized, or purely potential film genres, namely: “historical examination, theory, essay, memoirs.”²⁹ If this claim about

the character of historical examination of his film works has to be taken for serious, we should conclude that the compositional method adopted by Debord is exactly of the same type of that described by Benjamin, an attempt to disrupt the presumed homogeneity of the historical continuum by means of dialectical montage, conflicting combination of documents and commentary, allegorical construction as a way to achieve the truth of history.

This can be seen clearly in the film made in 1973 from the *The Society of Spectacle*, which, beyond being no doubt a theoretical essay and a kind of memoirs, is also a vertiginous recapitulation of the history of the workers' movement, its struggles, insurrections and defeats. This is accomplished by evoking in images the history of the Revolution, from the bourgeois revolution of 1789 to the First International of Marx and Bakunin, to the *détournement* of this tradition attempted with the creation of the Lettrist, then Situationist International during the 1950s. Debord's reading of the damages produced by the bureaucratic ideology of the Third International is perfectly consequent to Benjamin's criticism of the deterministic ideology of the Second. In a meaningful sequence, footage from Eisenstein's *October* is followed by images taken in 1968, producing the effect that the agit-prop flyers prepared in 1917, and carried by an enthusiast insurgent sailor, are retrieved and distributed half a century later by the Sorbonne students on strike. This montage is telling of Debord's high concern with the preservation and transmission of the experience of those "dangerous classes"³⁰ whose memory is subject to systematic deletion in the frame of spectacular history.

Here Debord meets Benjamin's quite similar preoccupation with the "refuses of history," like in the famous metaphor of the ragpicker.³¹ And it is here that the matter of historical investigation becomes one with that of an individual's memoirs (as well as of a theory, or an essay). "Another side of the deficiency of general historical life is that individual life as yet has no history," Debord's writes.

*The pseudo-events which rush by in spectacular dramatizations have not been lived by those informed of them [...] The individual experience of separate daily life remains without language, without concept, without critical access to its own past which has been recorded nowhere. It is not communicated. It is not understood and is forgotten to the profit of the false spectacular memory of the unmemorable.*³²

But how to solve the typical Benjaminian crux of the transmission of past experiences as true historical experiences, rather than just as accountable records of past events? It is only by recognizing the pure singularity of past events as lost forever that one can recognize his or her fleeting position in historical time, Debord suggests in the beautiful title of his second film: *On the Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Brief Unity of Time*. And from this extraordinary vantage point it also becomes finally possible to evaluate the degree to which one's own biography is connected to the collective history of a whole generation, and more precisely to the revolutionary effort of a particular generation.

All of Debord's films can be read as attempts at transmitting the historical experience of the challenges and struggles of his generation. This is clearly stated in *On the passage*, where the voice over declares that "an art film on this generation can only be a film about the absence of its works." What can the memory of a generation that hasn't left any trace of itself in spectacular history be like? This is the generation whose adventures are evoked by Debord throughout all of his cinematographic work, and already in the extremely original experiment of *Mémoires*, a collage-art book made together with Asger Jorn in 1959,³³ when Debord was only twenty-eight: a generation that emerges collectively in the early 50s, in the experience of the International Lettrists, pulls down one first time at the end of the decade, reappears under the vests of the Situationists during the 1960s and 1970s, only to receive its final defeat by 1978, the year when *In girum* was released. This generation that has produced no works of art nor artists – particularly because it was involved in an unrelenting struggle

against the existence of art itself – is nonetheless put in dialectical relation with the history of the earlier Internationals, or in short, with the collective history of Revolution.

This is made happen through a peculiar combination of private and public images, a disordered montage of seemingly unrelated documents often attached to virtually anonymous individuals who shared bits of Debord's personal and political experience. The links that tie each image to a particular person or event can be very obscure, as subtle as the thinnest of the lines created by Asger Jorn to connect the multiple *détournements* that constellate the surface of *Mémoires*. Yet, as Benjamin has shown, the enigmatic character is a substantial ingredient of the allegorical mechanism, and even the key of its effectiveness, a perfect device for a work whose primary aim is to be usable, in all senses in which a memory can be usable. Some could object that a usable memory may be a dangerous concept; this will not discourage those who are used to consider memory as a major field of conflict, ever.

Another possible objection is that Debord's autobiographical approach can be ineffective for the purpose of transmitting a "true" collective image of the history of the Situationist International. This criticism has been repeatedly advanced by several former members of the SI collective and it is an obvious consequence of a history that was itself constellated of conflicts and ruptures, somehow repeating the haunted side of the history of Revolution itself.

Yet there is no doubt that with his work, and particularly with his films, Debord has conveyed a powerful image of an oppositional history that would otherwise have remained practically unknown, a re-collection of fragments of past struggles in everyday life offered by an earlier generation to the use of the following.

Notes

¹ Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, edited by Howard Eiland, Micahel Jannings, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 2003. Further references to this essay will be given through the original paragraphs numbers.

² Id., *On the Concept of History*, cit., p. VII.

³ Jean-Luc Godard, *Introduction à la véritable histoire du cinéma*, Albatros, Paris 1980.

⁴ For more on this subject, see Monica Dall'Asta, *The (Im)possible History*, in Michael Temple, Michael Witt (eds.), *Forever Godard*, Black Dock, London 2005, pp. 350-363.

⁵ Guy Debord, *La Société du spectacle*, Buchet-Chastel, Paris 1967. Further references to the essay will be provided through the original paragraphs numbers.

⁶ Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, cit., p. VII.

⁷ Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, cit., p. 132.

⁸ Idem, p. 145.

⁹ Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, cit., p. XIV.

¹⁰ Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, cit., p. 128.

¹¹ Idem, p. 156.

¹² Also to be rediscovered by Louis Althusser in *Pour Marx*, François Maspero, Paris 1965.

¹³ Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, cit., p. XVI.

¹⁴ Idem, p. V.

¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, *Little History of Photography*, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1999, p. 519.

¹⁶ See Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations," in *Situationist International Anthology*, edited by Ken Knabb, Bureau of Public Secrets, Berkeley 1981, pp. 25-46.

¹⁷ Id., *The Society of Spectacle*, cit., p. 133.

¹⁸ Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, cit., p. XVI.

¹⁹ As defined by its major proponent, Hayden White in 1973, metahistory denounces the work of traditional history as a form of narration working to produce a "truth effect" by using ideological rhetorical devices. See Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore-New York 1973.

²⁰ Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, cit., p. XVII.

²¹ Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, cit., p. 208.

²² "If the historical object is blasted out of the historical process, it is because the monadological structure of the object demands it. This structure only becomes evident once the object has been blasted free. And it becomes evident precisely in the form of the historical argument which makes up the insude (and, as it were, the bowels) of the historical object, and into which all the forces and the interests of history enter on a reduced scale. The historical object, by virtue of its monadological structure, discovers within itself its own fore-history and after-history." Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1999, p. 3.

²³ Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire. Un poeta lirico nell'età del capitalismo avanzato*, edited by Giorgio Agamben, Barbara Chitussi, Clemens-Carl Härle, Neri Pozzi, Vicenza 2013.

²⁴ Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, cit., p. 208.

²⁵ Id., "Detournement as Negation and Prelude," in Ken Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*, cit., p. 55.

²⁶ "Method of this work: literary montage. I have nothing to say, only to show;" Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, cit., p. 574.

²⁷ Most famously in the text written as an introduction to the film version of *The Society of Spectacle* (1973), presented as a remake, or better an accomplishment of Eisenstein's unrealized project of a film drawn from Marx's *Capital*; see "A propos du film *La Société du spectacle*," in *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 12, 1969.

²⁸ But see, for more insights in this subject, Gerhard Richter, *Walter Benjamin and the Corpus of Autobiography*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit 2000.

²⁹ Guy Debord, *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*, in Id., *Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes*, Gallimard, Paris 1994, p. 202.

³⁰ Id., *Panegyric*, vol. I, Verso, London 1989, p. 23.

³¹ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, cit., p. 574.

³² Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, cit., p. 157.

³³ Guy Debord, Asger Jorn, *Mémoires*, L'Internationale Situationniste, Paris 1959.

The first of these is the fact that the population of the United States has increased rapidly since 1860. This is due to a number of causes, including immigration, natural increase, and the discovery of new lands. The second is the fact that the population of the United States is becoming more and more concentrated in the eastern half of the country. This is due to a number of causes, including the discovery of new lands, the growth of cities, and the fact that the eastern half of the country is more fertile than the western half. The third is the fact that the population of the United States is becoming more and more educated. This is due to a number of causes, including the growth of schools, the fact that more people are attending school, and the fact that more people are reading books and newspapers.

The fourth is the fact that the population of the United States is becoming more and more wealthy. This is due to a number of causes, including the growth of industry, the fact that more people are working for wages, and the fact that more people are owning property. The fifth is the fact that the population of the United States is becoming more and more civilized. This is due to a number of causes, including the growth of cities, the fact that more people are attending school, and the fact that more people are reading books and newspapers. The sixth is the fact that the population of the United States is becoming more and more united. This is due to a number of causes, including the growth of cities, the fact that more people are attending school, and the fact that more people are reading books and newspapers. The seventh is the fact that the population of the United States is becoming more and more healthy. This is due to a number of causes, including the growth of cities, the fact that more people are attending school, and the fact that more people are reading books and newspapers. The eighth is the fact that the population of the United States is becoming more and more virtuous. This is due to a number of causes, including the growth of cities, the fact that more people are attending school, and the fact that more people are reading books and newspapers. The ninth is the fact that the population of the United States is becoming more and more intelligent. This is due to a number of causes, including the growth of cities, the fact that more people are attending school, and the fact that more people are reading books and newspapers. The tenth is the fact that the population of the United States is becoming more and more patriotic. This is due to a number of causes, including the growth of cities, the fact that more people are attending school, and the fact that more people are reading books and newspapers.

Filmological Fallacies. EEG-Research and the Sleeping Beauty

My contribution emphasizes the need for an archaeological approach to the history of media theories. It does this through an emblematic case study of classic filmological research, focusing specifically on the use, in 1960, of electroencephalographic research (EEG research) in the study of film experience. It is my contention that in the late Fifties EEG research developed into a major filmological tool. This marked a crucial phase of transformation. It led to the move of the Institute de Filmologie from Paris to Milan and eventually to the decline of the research movement itself. My paper will explore these changes, positioning the beginnings of EEG research and its theoretical consequences within their institutional context.

Today, this historical case study can demonstrate not just historical change within filmology but illustrates the pitfalls that accompany deterministic uses of technological devices and experimental data in contemporary research on film and media.

Filmology from Paris to Milan

While, in recent times, a substantial amount of research work has focused on the filmological enterprise in France,¹ less research has been undertaken within the broader context of the European filmological network. Further, no work has examined Italian filmology. It is this latter point I wish to explore. Particularly in the years after the Second World War, following a longstanding dominion of Idealism and two decades of Fascist cultural isolationism, theoretical exchange between the national film culture and the transnational context could be found in Italy's contemporary film theory and its adhesion to the international filmological movement. Catholic thinkers like Agostino Gemelli, Mario Ponzo and Enrico Fulchignoni took a central position and gave key contributions to the construction of an Italian approach to filmology. This is an approach that had a wide resonance in international institutions like the Office Catholique International du Cinéma (OCIC).

Subsequently, this work impacted French Catholic thinkers such as Henry Agel, Jean-George Auriol, Amédée Ayfre, André Bazin, and Jean-Pierre Chartier.²

A pivotal role in this cultural debate engaging the Catholic Church was occupied by the Franciscan Father, Agostino Gemelli. A psychologist and the founder of the Catholic University in Milan in 1921, Gemelli was a keen upholder of the idea that the Church had to be committed and engaged in every facet of social life in Italy. With the case of film, as with many other political and cultural areas, Gemelli built a balanced position. He negotiated the need for the medium's legitimization and the economic interests with the need to control content through central guidance, censorship and moral persuasion. As early as the 1920s, he introduced film technologies in his laboratory for experimental psychology, in this way contributing to the cultural legitimization of the medium in the academic field.

Mario Ponzo and Enrico Fulchignoni drove Gemelli towards filmology after 1947, relying on his influence in order to establish film studies in Italy. In 1948 they represented Italy at the 12th International Congress of Psychology in Edinburgh, proudly presenting a session entirely dedicated to film psychology.³ Fulchignoni was an enthusiastic filmologist: he traveled also to Paris and to Zurich, began weaving a network of contacts with other key filmologists, and tried to import this new thought into Italy. For example, he got the director of the National Film Academy, Luigi Chiarini, to programme a course in Filmology at Rome University, hosted by Mario Ponzo. He also convened two seminal filmological conferences (held in 1948 and 1949) at the Film Festival in Venice. In 1949 Francesco Vito, professor of Economy at the Catholic University in Milan and member of the Italian national office at the UNESCO, was able to obtain a research grant for Fulchignoni in Paris. This developed, two years later, into a position at the UNESCO Film and Television Bureau.⁴

Fulchignoni, who earlier insisted that Father Gemelli create a filmological research laboratory at his University, now proposed to the Rector a slightly different working plan: he suggested that the Catholic University in Milan provide an audiovisual research center, similar to those he knew from English-speaking countries. Here, in order to keep abreast with the times, they could hold training conferences with audiovisual aid in 16 and 35 mm.⁵ Activity could thus be re-directed from the matter of individual perception and child education to the socio-psychological study of collective responses to mediatization processes. This could involve the training of teachers, media professionals, and – more generally – any kind of opinion-maker. The idea of film as a conditioning medium was in fact confirmed by the launch of television, by the spread of the notion of mass media, and by a wider theoretical shift determined (among others) by the influential readings of Katz and Lazarsfeld.⁶ Gemelli insisted throughout the 1950s on having a stable research program in the audiovisual field. He also supported the established psychological research program into film perception in his psychology laboratory. After his death, these goals were pursued by his disciple Leonardo Ancona.

In the late Fifties, UNESCO grants made joint sociological research possible. The audiovisual center at the University and the psychological laboratory could work together and, in 1958, the Catholic University also initiated a course in mass media sociology with an US-American visiting professor, Alfred McClung Lee. Alfred McClung Lee was an established communications scholar who focused on propaganda techniques in his role as guest and Scientific Director.⁷ As the UNESCO grants could not be renewed, the following year Gemelli turned to local politicians for fund-raising.⁸ The question about the diffusion of mass media was, by then, widely debated and Gemelli was able to arouse the interest of two leading Catholic public figures in Milan, Adrio Casati and Adolfo Beria d'Argentine. The first one, Casati, was the Christian-Democratic President of the Milan Provincial council; the latter was an influent magistrate in town, founder and chair of a Foundation tied to the Court of Justice and dedicated to social studies (Centro nazionale di prevenzione e difesa sociale). Gemelli also managed to involve his old friend and colleague, Marxist psychologist and psychoanalyst Cesare Musatti, at that time an influential professor at the State University of Milan.⁹ Finally, he used his con-

nections to French filmology to invite, as early as January 1957, Gilbert Cohen-Séat to cooperate on the project.¹⁰ When Father Gemelli died in 1959, a shared venture between the Province of Milan, the Centro nazionale di prevenzione e difesa sociale, and the Catholic and the State University of Milan was already at work. Indeed, in 1960, the "Istituto per lo studio sperimentale di problemi sociali con ricerche filmologiche e altre tecniche," shortly called Istituto di Filmologia was created. This was later dedicated to the memory of Agostino Gemelli and Cesare Musatti and is still active as the Istituto di Ricerca sulla Comunicazione "A. Gemelli - C. Musatti." The Institute was driven by the clearly expressed intention of gathering the most advanced studies on media from all over the world. Accordingly, the first aim of the Institute was to collect data and publications into a wide-reaching archival association of key global research centres (CIRSIV, *Conseil internationale de la recherche scientifique sur l'information visuelle*).

Although the archival mission of CIRSIV partially failed in this aspiration – it never produced a general register – new research programs were launched and the declining Parisian filmological institute was hosted. At the time, Cohen-Séat was going to be marginalized in Paris;¹¹ assigned to be scientific director of the research institute he could instead assume a leading role in Milan.¹² Cohen-Séat stayed in Milan until 1963, attending every advisory board meeting, and sometimes also representing the advisory board at administrative board meetings. The themes and methods that were at the very center of his research agenda in the Fifties were assumed by the new institution. Firstly and most notably, the research Institute bought the editorial rights for the publishing of the *Revue de Filmologie* from the Paris publisher who owned them. A new series was launched with the main title *Ikon* and *Revue de Filmologie* as a subtitle. The Institute also commissioned new short films to be used as Thematic Film Tests.¹³ Lastly, but not least, the EEG-research which Cohen-Séat had been practicing from the mid Fifties was assumed as a basic instrument for mass media research.

EEG-research as a filmological tool

EEG-research started in the Twenties, when German researcher Hans Berger first applied it to humans. Berger recognized an electric brain activity in the frequency range of 7 to 14 Hertz, which he called Alpha waves. In the following years, other frequency ranges were recognized and categorized as Beta, Gamma, Theta and Delta waves. In the Fifties, EEG-research was at its peak; by the middle of the decade EEG-researchers could define the state of sleep in new, positivist terms, measuring different phases of it like the newly explored REM-state.¹⁴ Filmologists paid great attention to EEG-research from its very inception. In 1951, the *Revue de Filmologie* had published an initial study by Henri Gastaut and Annette Roger¹⁵ where brainwave activity provoked by intermittent light stimuli was described. These two scholars proposed to extend their research to include film stimuli. In a very notable way, Gastaut and Roger linked the different experiences of film vision and laboratory practices (light stimuli) while they also gave particular focus to sensitive subjects – "*les instables emotives, les 'neuro-labiles'*."¹⁶ This paved the way for wider research in a filmological context. In fact, reactions to light stimuli by sensitive subjects could particularly reinforce the use of film metaphors in psychological research.¹⁷ Vice versa, this research could elicit a radical, alarmed and negative interpretation of audiovisual experience. Indeed, in both sane and insane subjects, intermittent light stimuli showed an increase in Theta waves (the frequency range from 4 to 7 Hz), which the scholars dismissively related to unpleasant emotional reactions ("*manifestations émotives désagréables*").¹⁸

In 1954, Cohen-Séat published in the *Revue de Filmologie* the first results of a series of studies on film vision, stating that some subjects showed an electrical brain activity similar to sleep states. That is, they revealed a lowering of Alpha waves and an increase of Beta, Theta, and Delta waves. In successive studies, these results were

confirmed and led to the introduction of special machinery for the synchronization of the EEG measurement with film narratives.¹⁹ Cohen-Séat interpreted these results in terms of a conditioning potential, in a way that Martin Lefebvre described as a behaviourist program.²⁰ In fact, Cohen-Séat explicitly referred to a Pavlovian subject (*"la nature de réponses émotionnelles conditionnées peut être discutée chez un sujet dont la vigilance est abaissée et dont les processus habituels de défense, déjà déroutés par une stimulation d'un type nouveau, devraient en outre être figés par une 'attitude spectaculaire'"*),²¹ borrowing even outdated notions like suggestion.²²

It is striking, however, the fact that the results of EEG-research could coherently answer different needs exactly at the same time. It responded to a widespread fear of modernity, which could be thus technologically mastered; the pedagogical apprehension for a changing, mediatized juvenile life-world; and the scientific anxiety to classify and sort out bodily experience, including the old, fascinating and mysterious experience of dreaming. This latter point was one of the *Revue de Filmologie's* main tasks from its beginnings.

But the results of EEG-research into film at the filmological lab in Paris were actually not so consistent, or better, they were not easy to decode. Differences between subjects were noticed very early, and typologizations failed to give more evidence. In 1961, comparing EEG research data with psycho-motor tests, Pierre Moron stated that such differences and contradictions were too strong to assume an absolute statistical significance of this kind of data (at least, at that moment).²³ Cohen-Séat and his researchers also tried to consolidate EEG research data, making comparison tests with other methodologies: TFTs, for example, and (most notably) Rohrschach Tests.²⁴ As a result, EEG reactivity increased as the Rohrschach tests showed emotional reactions, *"signes d'émotivité apparente."* Further, researchers could deduce, following the Rohrschach method, that kinesthetic reactions should be connected to passivity.²⁵ Nonetheless, the two series of data were finally too divergent to give solid explanations of the phenomenon. Indeed, the results were repeatedly tied to different individual sensibilities and predispositions, anticipating a more nuanced concept of personality. Most notably, Cohen-Séat himself recognized the centrality of signification processes and narrative comprehension,²⁶ opening the research field to critical approaches and new threads.²⁷

Doubts and contradictions notwithstanding, researchers at the newborn Istituto di Filmologia in Milan needed scientific proof to assert their efficacy. The impact of American media sociology and the pressure of political sponsors forced research to shift towards social psychology, and hence towards the key concept of visual information. The Institute organized, as its first public event, an international Conference on this theme. This conference was aptly entitled *Visual Information Modalities: Scientific Research and Political Action*. The Institute's main concern became the "study of the degrees of effectiveness of film projections."²⁸ EEG-research results, in this context, again assumed the strong, conditioning connotation that Cohen-Séat earlier assigned them. Leonardo Ancona – who was to be assigned a leading role in the Milan research centre as well as membership in the Scientific Board of the Conference – presented a paper on the relationship between cinema and "mental hygiene." For him, EEG-research had confirmed the "hypnotic" hypothesis about film viewing, as the electric activity "degrades" in film viewing from the state of wakefulness to the state of sleep.²⁹ This degradation, Ancona curiously added, also explains why sometimes we become sleepy at the movies.³⁰ Ancona, speaking in different occasions on this topic, fiercely defended his position, adding some interesting remarks on the emotional potential of EEG-recordings. For example he explained that, in film viewing, the lowering of Alpha waves is coupled with an increase of Beta, Theta, and Delta waves. These (respectively) signal anxiety, deep aggressiveness, and pain. "Theta and Delta waves – he stated – are normally absent from normal life, and are characteristically pathological, if spontaneous."³¹ This was exactly what his political counterparts wanted to hear: media experience were implicate in and with questions of control.³²

Conclusions

EEG-research started in the Fifties at the filmological institute in Paris. This research saw the configuration of a contradictory and widely debated model of the film viewing experience as a hypnotic state. When Gilbert Cohen-Séat moved the filmological enterprise to Milan, in 1961, this Italian researcher radicalised this approach. This shift was arguably responsible, in part, for the end of filmology itself as a movement and as an institution. Undoubtedly, this same data is interpreted differently today. EEG-research has been used in television and advertising studies; it's a tool for neuro-scientific research and complements magnetic resonance in neuro-marketing. Like any technological device, it can still be used to configure an ideal subject: maybe not the hypnotized, dreaming Sleeping Beauty of the Nineteen Sixties, but something like a nice and active Catgirl, as in the case of the Japanese Necomimis (<http://www.necomimi.com>). Here, playful headbands take the form of cat-ears capable of recognizing basic emotions through an electroencephalographic sensor. Emotions are signalled with a slight movement: when ears perk up, you're focused, ears drop down, you're relaxed, and so on. Evidently, the cultural and political value of such a new subjectivity is an open matter.

Notes

¹ On the origins of the filmological enterprise in France, see *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 19, no. 2-3, Spring 2009. See also Francesco Casetti, *Theories of Cinema: 1945-1995*, University of Texas Press, Austin 1999, pp. 91-93.

² François Albera, "Notes sur le rapports entre l'Office Catholique International du Cinéma et la filmologie," in *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, cit., pp. 103-112, esp. p. 105.

³ Mario Ponzo, "Cinéma et psychologie, Thème au XII^e Congrès International de Psychologie (Edimbourg, 1948)," in *Revue Internationale de Filmologie*, vol. 1, no. 3-4, 1948, pp. 295-298.

⁴ I delved into the first steps of Italian filmology in my contribution to the 2012 Udine Conference, *The Educational Question and the Filmological Enterprise in Italy*, in Anna Bertolli, Andrea Mariani, Martina Panelli (eds.), *Il cinema si impara? Can We Learn Cinema?*, Forum, Udine 2013, pp. 67-73.

⁵ See a letter signed by Enrico Fulchignoni and addressed to Agostino Gemelli, 26 July 26, 1949, Archivio storico dell'Università Cattolica, fund Rettorato, file no. 6141/61.

⁶ Elihu Katz, Paul Felix Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence, the Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications*, The Free Press, Glencoe, IL 1955. The *Revue de Filmologie* reported about Lazarsfeld's researches since 1952, see Georges Friedmann, Edgar Morin, "Sociologie du cinéma," in *Revue Internationale de Filmologie*, vol. 3, no. 10, 1952, p. 112 and "États-Unis. Enquête bibliographique," in *Revue Internationale de Filmologie*, vol. 3, no. 11, 1952, pp. 241-242.

⁷ *Annuario dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore per l'anno accademico 1957-1958 e 1958-1959*, Vita & Pensiero, Milano, p. 412. See also a letter signed by Alfred McLung Lee and addressed to Francesco Vito, 19 October, 1957, Archivio storico dell'Università Cattolica, fund Ex economato, file no. 64.

⁸ See a letter signed by Alfred McLung Lee and addressed to Francesco Vito, 10 November 1958, Archivio storico dell'Università Cattolica, fund Carte personali Vito, file no. 11/1.

⁹ Musatti's writings on film include a.o. a contribution to the psychoanalysis of film, "Cinéma et psychanalyse," in *Revue Internationale de Filmologie*, vol. 2, no. 6, 1949-1950, pp. 185-194, and his seminal study on stereocinesis, "Les Phénomènes stéréocinétiques et les effets stéréoscopiques du cinéma

normal," in *Revue Internationale de Filmologie*, vol. VIII, no. 29, 1957, pp. 3-20, and have all been reissued in Cesare L. Musatti, *Scritti sul cinema*, Testo & Immagine, Torino 2000.

¹⁰ An ordinance of the President of the Milan Province states that Cohen-Séat had been asked for advice "on occasion of the international conference on Film and the psychological integration in social structures," held at the Catholic University in Milan from 17 January to 20 January, 1957 (Giunta provinciale di Milano, Ordinanza Presidenziale, 16 Mai 1960, Archivio dell'Istituto di Ricerca sulla Comunicazione "A. Gemelli - C. Musatti"). Cohen-Séat himself recalls the different steps that led to the constitution of the new-born Milan Institute in a letter addressed to Beria d'Argentine (9 December 1959, Archivio dell'Istituto di Ricerca sulla Comunicazione "A. Gemelli - C. Musatti"): "Vous savez, mieux que personne, avec quelle patience nos efforts ont été soutenus depuis plus de deux ans. Notre accord fondamental avec le regretté Père Gemelli en 1957, votre visite en janvier 1958 à mon Laboratoire parisien en compagnie de Monsieur le Président Casati, le projet que nous avons alors établi ensemble, nos séjours à Londres et à Cambridge, notre réunion en Avril 1958 avec Sir Frederic [Bartlett] à Milan, enfin la décision positive du Conseil Provincial en Octobre 1958, avaient permis de penser que notre entreprise verrait le jour en 1959." Cohen-Séat's letter mentions two further meetings (in Cambridge and Stresa) held in 1959 in order to tackle the problems and delays caused by Gemelli's death, on 15 July 1959.

¹¹ On the decline of filmology in France and Cohen-Séat's marginalisation, see François Albera, Martin Lefebvre, "Filmologie, le retour," in Id. (eds.), *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques / Cinémas: Journal of Film Studies: La filmologie, de nouveau*, cit., pp. 13-56, and Martin Lefebvre, "L'Aventure filmologique: documents et jalons d'une histoire institutionnelle," in *Idem*, cit., pp. 59-100.

¹² Cohen-Séat's function and activities in Milan are attested by the reports of the administrative board, manuscript, Archivio dell'Istituto di Ricerca sulla Comunicazione "A. Gemelli - C. Musatti."

¹³ Nonetheless, it seems that all of the TFT research was still carried on with the films that Cohen-Séat had produced earlier in Paris and some copies of which the institute bought in its early months, see *idem*. On the Thematic Film Tests, see Martin Lefebvre, "L'Aventure filmologique," cit., pp. 73-74, as well as Massimo Locatelli, "The Educational Question and the Filmological Enterprise in Italy," cit., p. 69.

¹⁴ Barbara E. Swartz, Eli S. Goldensohn, "Timeline of the History of EEG and Associated Fields," in *Electroencephalography and Clinical Neurophysiology*, vol. 106, no. 2, 1998, pp. 173-176; Eugene Aserinsky, Nathaniel Kleitman, "Regularly Occurring Periods of Eye Motility, and Concomitant Phenomena, During Sleep," in *Science*, vol. 118, no. 3062, 4 September 1953, pp. 273-274.

¹⁵ Henri Gastaut, Annette Roger, "Effets psychologiques, somatiques et électro-encéphalographiques du stimulus lumineux intermittent rythmique. Applications possibles à la Filmologie," in *Revue Internationale de Filmologie*, vol. 2, no. 7-8, 1951, pp. 215-229.

¹⁶ *Idem*, p. 229.

¹⁷ "Le sujet voit par exemple des 'yeux,' des 'crâne,' des 'hommes revêtus d'un imperméable.' Ces objets sont multiples mais tous semblables et répartis en couronne ou en longue procession. Le caractère dynamique est constant; les images se déplacent continuellement dans le champ visuel, réalisant une impression de 'scène cinématographique,' 'comme si tout se passait sur un écran,' dit l'une de nos malades, dont nous rapportons plus loin l'observation." *Idem*, p. 222.

¹⁸ *Idem*, p. 221. "En particulier le rythme thêta temporel est fréquemment observé [chez le sujet à affectivité anormalement labile] et cette réponse secondaire est parfois si brutale et ample qu'elle revêt des caractères voisins de certains paroxysmes épileptiques, tandis qu'elle s'accompagne cliniquement d'intenses réactions émotives." *Idem*, p. 223.

¹⁹ Gilbert Cohen-Séat, G. Lelord, Monique Rebeillard, "Conditions actuelles d'utilisation de l'ÉEG dans

la recherche filmologique," in *Revue Internationale de Filmologie*, vol. 7, no. 27-28, 1956, pp. 157-176.

²⁰ Martin Lefebvre, "L'Aventure filmologique," cit., p. 21. See also Gilbert Cohen-Séat, G. Lelord, "Etude expérimentale des procédés cinématographiques comme agents de conditionnement," in *Revue Internationale de Filmologie*, vol. 10, no. 34, 1960, pp. 3-12.

²¹ *Idem*, pp. 3-4.

²² Gilbert Cohen-Séat, "Le Pouvoir de suggestion et l'influence du cinéma," in *Revue Internationale de criminologie et de Police technique*, no. 3, 1961, pp. 198-209. Gemelli himself in his earlier film-related writings was prone to apply this term to weaker categories of movie-goers, like children, thus justifying the institute of censorship. See Andrea Bellavita, Massimo Locatelli, *Padre Agostino Gemelli*, in Raffaele De Berti, Massimo Locatelli (eds.), *Figure della modernità nel cinema italiano (1900-1940)*, ETS, Pisa 2008, pp. 211-234.

²³ "Ceci laisse supposer qu'il n'y a pas de liaison 'directe' entre les résultats des deux méthodes employées, électroencéphalographie dynamique et tests psychomoteurs." Pierre Moron, "Recherches sur la motricité (Étude de corrélation entre données d'électroencéphalographie dynamique et de tests psychomoteurs)," in *Revue Internationale de Filmologie*, vol. 11, no. 36-37, 1961, pp. 39-90.

²⁴ Cohen-Séat, Lelord, Jampolski and Lauzel's list of tests includes also "D 48, cubes de Kohs, Cattell facteur F, test filmiques, etc..." Gilbert Cohen-Séat, G. Lelord, R. Jampolsky, J.-P. Lauzel, "Film-E.E.G.-Rohrschach. Réactions psycho-physiologiques et problèmes de personnalité," in *Revue Internationale de Filmologie*, vol. 10, no. 32-33, 1960, pp. 35-62, esp. note 1, p. 36.

²⁵ "La confrontation de données fournies par la réactivité-mouvement et le contrôle de l'émotivité permet d'établir des relations que nous rappèlerons ici: sur l'E.E.G. de certain sujet, au moment du mouvement cinématographique, se manifestent des signes pouvant être considérés comme de témoins d'une motricité subliminaire." *Idem*, p. 45.

²⁶ "On avait vérifié que des modifications E.E.G. Peuvent être fonction, au moins partiellement, du contenu du 'discours' filmique. Certaines réactions [...] sont manifestement liées à des significations". Gilbert Cohen-Séat, G. Lelord, Monique Rebeillard, "Conditions actuelles d'utilisation de l'EEG dans la recherche filmologique," cit., p. 163.

²⁷ Exemplary in this respect: Roland Barthes, "Première conférence internationale sur l'information visuelle (Milan, 9-12 juillet 1961)," in *Communications*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1961, pp. 223-225.

²⁸ *Revue Internationale de Filmologie*, Numéro spécial, vol. 10, no. 35, 1960, p. 53.

²⁹ Leonardo Ancona, "Rapporti tra igiene mentale e cinema," in Istituto per lo Studio Sperimentale dei Problemi Sociali con Tecniche Filmologiche, *Prima Conferenza Internazionale di Informazione Visiva, Milano-Venezia, 1961*, vol. I, Milano [s.d.], pp. 63-65, esp. p. 64.

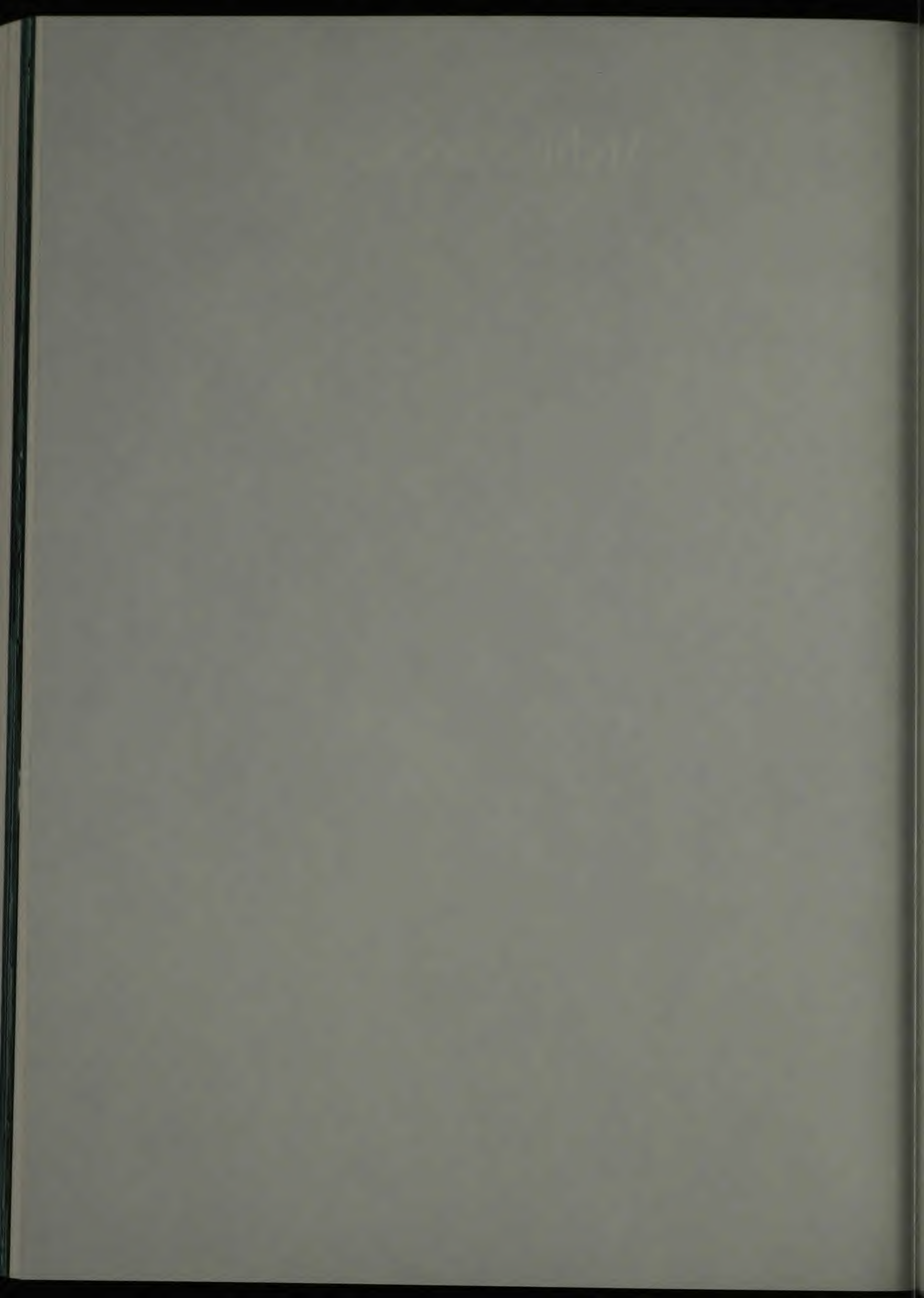
³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ *I correttivi dell'influsso cinematografico nei giovani. Atti del simposio promosso dal Centro nazionale film per la gioventù e dall'Istituto "Agostino Gemelli" per lo studio sperimentale di problemi sociali dell'informazione visiva, Milano, 8-9 giugno 1963*, Amministrazione provinciale, Milano 1963, pp. 22-23 (my translation).

³² "Le but serait à la fois de parvenir à limiter des effets profonds, de réduire, dans l'information visuelle, ce qu'elle peut avoir de nocivité présente, et inversement de mobiliser systématiquement toutes les potentialités de structuration et d'acculturation qu'elle peut présenter. Le lien original ainsi établi entre une recherche à ses débuts et l'élaboration d'une forme de régulation sociale ne saurait manquer d'être fécond." Adrio Casati, "Problemes du responsable politique face aux réalités sociales et aux modalités de la recherche scientifique," in *Ikon. Cinema, televisione, iconografia / Revue Internationale de Filmologie*, vol. 12, no. 40-41, 1962, pp. 17-22, esp. p. 22.

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The Existence of the Spectator

Car la pratique historique sait bien qu'il s'agit non pas de revivre le passé, de le percevoir et de l'éprouver, comme on perçoit et on éprouve un spectacle présent, non pas même de le re-présenter, comme une image schématique dessine en les simplifiant les contours d'un objet, mais de le présenter dans un discours qui le rende intelligible.

François Châtelet, *La Naissance de l'histoire*

Is the cinematic spectator an historical object? And if so how does the historicity of the figure of the spectator relate to what we generally call history, and to the history of cinema in particular?

While the history of spectatorship has been the object of film historiography for some time now, particularly the "new cinema history," these questions open up a field of inquiry that lies beyond the specific contingent practices of spectatorship. As I would like to show whether the spectator is an historical object is a matter of historical epistemology, that is, of an approach that assumes that what we can know at any given moment is a matter of assumptions that have their own history. As a matter of historical epistemology, the question of the cinematic spectator concerns film theory as much as film and media historiography. Ultimately, the set of questions I want to ask here derives from the observation that in the field of film studies, which is now a mature field of scholarly inquiry with various schools, competing approaches and paradigms, the one thing everyone seems to agree on, the one non-controversial assumption in a highly contested field of inquiry, concerns the existence of the spectator.

One could argue, in fact, that despite all the extensive debates about spectatorship in film studies the figure of the spectator remains both under-theorised and sorely under-historicised – under-theorised in the sense that we continue to debate various incarnations of the spectator and various modes of spectatorship without asking ourselves why there is a basic agreement about the existence of the spectator; under-historicised in the sense that we study the history of modes and practices of spectatorship but not the history of the figure of the spectatorship, or the question of the spectator figure's relation to what we call history.

If we agree that there is indeed a need to further theorise and historicise the spectator figure the spectator figure's relation to history can serve as a useful point of entry. Very broadly speaking, the practice of historiography has been linked to the question of the spectator and of spectatorship since a theory of history and historiography has emerged in late antiquity. Lucian of Samosata in his 2nd century tract *How to Write History* discusses historiography as a practice of evocation that addresses the reader as a spectator. Holding up the Athenian sculp-

tor Phidias as the master of historiography Lucian argues that the goal of historiography is to make the addressee imagine the events so that he can see them happen. As much as modern historiography based on "*Quellenkritik*," i.e. the comparative critical evaluation of multiple sources, attempts to distance itself from the idea of history as spectacle the very idea of historiography as *presentation* as endorsed by Châtelet and others suggests that the epistemology of history as spectacle and of historical experience as a matter of spectatorship continues to haunt modern historiography, certainly well into the 19th century and Ranke's famous dictum that the task of the historian is to depict the historical event "so wie es eigentlich ist gewesen," as it actually happened.

For film studies the complex relationship of history and spectatorship is a major concern. One could argue that the relationship between cinema and history is marked by basic tension. Where Siegfried Kracauer, Jacques Rancière and others point to an affinity and even an isomorphism between cinema and historiography; Pierre Sorlin and others insist that cinema contains an a-historical core which derives from the fact that film affords an experience that is both ephemeral, i.e. leaves no traces that may be used as sources for historiography, and structurally repeatable, i.e. an experience that is not an event. Cinema then can be described as not so much a homology of history as a *sublation* of history, that is an both an affirmation and a negation of history and historical experience. This in turn raises the question whether the figure of the spectator is not also complicit in what may be described as a fundamental a-historicity of cinema. To ask whether the spectator is an historical object then is also to address the question of cinema and history.

While the history of various modes of spectatorship is indeed being written in the form of historical reception studies as pioneered by Janet Staiger in her 1992 book *Interpreting Film* and has been further developed into a sub-field of cinema studies under the heading of "new cinema history" by authors such as Anette Kuhn, Daniel Biltereyst, Philippe Meers and the researchers of the HOMER network, the figure of the spectator itself remains a conceptual void.

The spectator whose existence we all agree on is simultaneously everyone and nobody in particular. Anyone can be a spectator, and many people have been spectators throughout history, but to be a spectator is to assume a position that appears to have no history of its own. The position of the spectator is always there. It is available for anyone but it appears to have neither an ontological substance nor any kind of historical specificity of its own. At first, then, the figure of the spectator appears to be not so much an empirical entity as a concept. The spectator, it would seem, shares a fundamental property with concepts of the type that German historian and philosopher Reinhart Koselleck has described as "*Erfahrungsstiftungsbegriffe*," i.e. as concepts that enable the type of experience that they describe. *History, nation, revolution* are all both "*Kollektivsingulare*," i.e. concepts that describe a multiplicity of experiences, and "*Erfahrungsstiftungsbegriffe*," i.e. concepts that enable this multiplicity of experiences. Similarly, *spectator* and *spectatorship* appear to be concepts that both cover and enable a multiplicity of experiences. Should we then write the history of the spectator figure as a history of the concept of the spectator by tracing the various semantic shifts the concept has undergone from antiquity to the present day, with a particular eye to what happens in the transition to modernity? Or should we embrace the tenets of the new history of ideas in the sense of Quentin Skinner and study the usages of the idea of the spectator as speech acts tailored and targeted to specific contexts?

While both history of the concept and of the idea of the spectator need to be written and remain to be written, both the concept and the idea of the spectator – as a function that anyone can assume and that nobody is – appear to be relatively void of the kind of content that is the stuff that historical semantics of "*Begriffsgeschichte*" and the historical pragmatics of the new history of ideas are made of.

So how should we then study and write the history of what appears to be a suspiciously an-historic entity, the spectator?

This is the question that I would like to address in what follows.

I will start out with what appears to be a straightforward and simple problem: the problem of the audience. I want to ask what the ephemeral and elusive nature of the cinematic audience means for the practice of historiography. I will claim that the cinematic audience is invisible and destined to remain invisible, which poses a particular problem for historiography. I will then move on to the concept of the spectator and trace briefly how that concept operates in theories of cinematic spectatorship. In my conclusion I will relate the question of the historicity of the cinematic spectator back to the question of history as spectacle by discussing the metaphor of theatrical spectatorship in the writings of Kant and Burke on the French revolution which in my estimate mark a key moment in the formation of what we may call the modern epistemology of spectatorship.

What follows has of necessity the nature of a sketch. What I hope to achieve is to provide the outline of a problem, a problem that I believe is relevant to film and media scholarship but also a problem that can help us understand what film and media scholarship can contribute to cultural theory more broadly speaking.

I

A couple of years ago I attended a conference in Paris on the topic of high and low definition in media. On the final panel a French IT technician/artist who works with Bruno Latour told the audience that the cinema as a venue was dead, and that we must explode the screen and replace it with smart touch-screen textiles.

Later that same day I saw a line of people stretching around the block, waiting to get into a screening of *Gravity* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2013) at the UGC Danton. If you are a *cinophile* you can read this as a vindication of your fondest beliefs. The French may come up with all kinds of crazy futurist ideas about smart textile screens but in the end they still love going to the cinema. In France at least the cinema is alive and well and has a bright future.

If one looks a little more closely, one will understand that the line stretching around the block is the result of several factors coming together. The proverbial love of Parisians for the cinema, the Parisian "*cinéphilie*" is one factor. The French go to the cinema three times per year per head of the population, which is one and a half times as much as the Germans, for instance.

Another factor, which is probably the decisive factor is the French ticketing system. Different from most other countries Parisian cinemas have no reserved seating system. Patrons buy their tickets and stand in line. Those who are first in line get to choose their seats; those at the end of the line will be seated in the remaining seats. If Parisian cinemas adopted a reserved seat and advanced booking system, which recent advances in computer technology would easily permit, there would be no lines. Yet Parisian cinemas continue to cultivate lines.

Apparently the long lines serve a purpose.

One possible purpose of the visible lines is to support the marketing of films. Cinema patrons never know in advance whether they will like a film, nor will producers know whether there is an audience for the film. Markets for information goods are structured by symmetrical ignorance, as the economists like to say. "Nobody knows anything," as Hollywood screenwriter William Goldman once describe the uncertainty conundrum of filmmaking and film viewing. In market characterised by symmetrical ignorance films that are already successful are safe bets. Long lines stretching around the block communicate success. They signal to passerbys that this cinema is showing a film many people want to see. Letting people wait in line outside the cinema means to enlist them to advertise the film before they have even seen it, and without pay.

But there may be another purpose of the line of moviegoers that has nothing to do with economics. The obvious effect the Paris ticketing system is that it makes the audience visible in a public space. Cinema audiences are not normally visible, quite to the contrary. The architectural set-up of the Austrian film museum impres-

sively illustrates this logic. The Austrian film museum in Vienna is the archetype of the black box cinema designed to make the audience disappear into a dark space and allow patrons to completely immerse themselves in the appreciation of the work of art on the screen. Peter Kubelka and Peter Konlechner, the founders of the film museum, even went so far as to design a device that would completely separate each spectator from her neighbor so that she would not be disturbed in her contemplation of the film. Konlechner called this installation the "invisible cinema," but the invisible cinema rendered invisible was not the film but the cinema space and the audience.

While Kubelka and Konlechner's "invisible cinema" marks a radical, essentialist notion of the cinematic space it is still very much in tune with the practice of the cinema as an anonymous urban space. At the opposite end of such an idea of the cinema are 19th-century notions of the theater and the opera. To take an example from Paris the Opéra Garnier is a case in point. Roughly nine tenths of the accessible surface of the building are designed as a stage for the audience to present themselves to each other, with large entrance halls and broad staircases visible from spectacular galleries that serve as framing devices for a visible audience in their own way. Even the actual theater space in itself is designed in a way to let audience members inspect each other as much as the spectacle on the stage. In a theater building like the Opéra Garnier the spectacle that really matters is the entrance of the audience.

But while cinema audiences, as epitomised in a radical fashion by the audiences Kubelka and Konlechner had in mind for the Austrian film museum, tend toward anonymity and invisibility Paris cinema line create a substitute for the spaces of "defilement" of the Opéra Garnier and make the invisible audience of the cinema visible. The sidewalk is the stage on which the cinema audience has its entrance into public space. But the visibility of this audience is a precarious visibility, temporary and fleeting, but also more urbane, anonymous and democratic than the quasi-regal ritual of bourgeois visibility for which the Opéra Garnier provides the stage. Rather than the solid architectural framework of the "*grand escalier*" the stage where the cinema audience becomes visible is that most transient of public spaces the sidewalk.

One might object that there exists a well-established form of ceremonial visibility for the cinema audience, namely the procession on the red carpets at the Cannes film festivals and at the Oscars. But the visible audience of the red carpet happens to be composed mostly of the kind of people that later appear on the screen. On the red carpet the cinema audience is only present vicariously, with the cameras of the photographers serving as technical substitutes for the invisible audience. In fact one could argue that the red carpet, through a double substitution, serves both as a performative substitute and a definition through performance of the cinematic audience. On the red carpet actors perform the audience for the cameras and cameras stand in for the audience. In and through the excessive visibility of the celebrity, the cinema actor on the red carpet the cinema audience remains anonymous and invisible.

As an object of knowledge the cinema audiences shares some of the same characteristics of the audience of modern "mass media." Communications research as audience research first appears in the 1930s in the aftermath of the emergence of radio, the prototype of the "mass medium." The "ur-scene" of communications research, the challenge that gives birth to the new discipline is precisely the emergence of a new type of audience that has not existed quite in this manner before in the history of the arts or of communication, for that matter. This new audience is anonymous, amorphous and, by implication, invisible. This is the public of radio and of television, a public that needs to be named, and the entire ambition of communication research is to give a name, a shape and visibility to this audience through means of empirical audience research – in order to make audiences safe for political communication and advertising.

It should be noted in passing that Hollywood only became interested the shape and composition of their audience in the mid-1930s when the sound film boom that had shielded the industry from the impact of the Great

Depression for almost six years subsided and ticket sales dramatically decreased. Only when the audience started to disappear did the film industry hire specialists like Leo A. Handel and later George Gallup to go searching for the lost public.

As mentioned before, one of the most significant advances in cinema studies in the last few years has been the emergence of the new cinema history, i.e. of the study of historical audiences. In Europe the work of John Sedgwick, Philippe Meers and Daniel Biltereyst and of the HOMER network is most notable in this field. It is perhaps no coincidence that some of the leaders in this field have crossed over into cinema studies from communication studies. While critics deplore the fact that the new cinema history loses sight of the object of film, the more notable fact about the new cinema historians is that they transfer the epistemology of the anonymous, amorphous and invisible audience from the realm of classical mass communication, i.e. radio and television, to the realm of cinema. One could argue that it is precisely the ephemeral, fleeting character of the cinematic audience, the fact that it is anonymous, amorphous and invisible and leaves no traces that provided the methodological challenge from which the new cinema history emerged.

But the invisibility of the audience has other implications for the history of cinema. In a recent conversation, Alex Horwath, the current director of the Austrian Filmmuseum, pointed out that the lack of visibility of the cinema audience creates a problem for the long-term preservation of cinema as an art form. The policy of the Filmmuseum is to screen films in their original formats, using the original technology, rather than digital substitutes (digital films are obviously screened in digital format). In the long run, preserving screening prints of all the films on the program will require an enormous financial effort, not least because the technologies are now obsolete and it is becoming increasingly costly and difficult to preserve films in their original material format.

Traditional art forms such as painting or the opera, Alex Horwath argues, have an advantage over cinema because they lend themselves to modes of presentation where the audience can be the spectacle. A museum like the Louvre can cater to tens of thousands of visitors every day, and you can use museums and operas to hold high-profile sponsor events where important people can showcase themselves for each other's appreciation, without having to seriously engage with the art works, which are basically hanging at their backs. In the cinema no such showcase for sponsor ego exists. So the big challenge for an institution like the Austrian Filmmuseum going forward will be to raise funds for the continuous presentation of a medium that is inherently urbane and democratic, a medium for an invisible audience that does not in and of itself offer a stage for the self-presentation of important politicians and donors.

Yet the dubious ontological status of the audience, the fact that both as an empirical entity and object of knowledge it remains amorphous, anonymous and invisible coincides with a stupendous degree of certainty about the individual members of this audience in the abstract. The ephemerality of the audience goes hand in hand with the almost uncanny degree of certainty of what appears to be a widely shared belief in the existence of the spectator.

II

Debates about spectatorship have been the bread and butter of film theory ever since film studies became established as an academic discipline some forty years ago. Looking back on those forty years we can identify three main lines of debate in theories of cinematic spectatorship. The first line of arguments concerns the active/passive dichotomy.

Theorists in the Freudo-Neo-Marxian mold, whether they draw on Adorno and the Frankfurt school or belong to the Althusser-Lacanian persuasion, describe the spectator in terms of an ill-fated complicity with the exploitative logic of the cultural industries or in terms of interpellation and "position:" the spectator exists, but

has no agency of his or her own; the spectator is a passive receptacle of meaning or product of the text, is spoken by the discourse.

Following the lead of Stuart Hall and his encoding/decoding model, theorists from the field of cultural studies argue that there is a certain degree of agency, a space for oppositional readings, and that the spectator is fundamentally active, but needs to be weary. Going even further cognitive theorists following the lead of David Bordwell have argued that the spectator actively constructs the narrative world and is certainly not passive. The spectator is nothing if not an autonomous agent.

More recently in his cinema book *Die Künste des Kinos*, published in 2013, philosopher Martin Seel, following in the footsteps of Adorno but adopting a more light-hearted stance, has embraced the passivity of the spectator as an important dimension of human existence and the cinema as the art form that activates this passive side of human experience in an exemplary and comprehensive fashion.

The second major line of argument in the debate about spectatorship concerns the questions of race, class and gender. Do race, class and gender matter or not? Is it possible to describe modes of cinematic spectatorship without regard for issues of identity politics? In the debate about these questions the fault line runs between Neo-Marxian, Post-Structuralist and Cultural Studies approaches on the one hand and cognitivists and authors drawing on analytical philosophy and on arguments from philosophical anthropology on the other.

Laura Mulvey famously claimed that the gaze in Hollywood cinema is male, and argument that has repercussions to this day and continues to reverberate in the more recent debates about spectatorship in queer theory, while cognitivists and many philosophers consider the spectator to be endowed with a computer-like information processing device called the "brain," a basic human feature which does not vary significantly from one sentient person to another.

The third major line of debate in spectatorship theory is more recent and concerns what we may call the "proper ecology of spectatorship," that is the question of how modes of spectatorship change with what Francesco Casetti proposes to call the "relocation of cinema," the dissemination of moving images beyond the cinema and the home in the wake of the emergence of digital network communication and portable devices. Here the fault line runs between what we may describe proponents of a variation of cinephilia that we may describe as "love of the *dispositif*," that is theorists who believe that cinema and the experience of cinema are only possible within the classical *dispositif*, and what we may call the "enthusiasts of relocation" who believe that a valid experience of cinema is possible even beyond the classical *dispositif*. We could cite Raymond Bellour and his recent opus magnum "Le corps du cinema" as a key figure among the "lovers of the *dispositif*" and Francesco Casetti as the leading enthusiast of relocation. I may add that one particularly promising line of inquiry in this field concerns the question of how modes of spectatorship change with the emergence of the touch screen. This is an area where, among others, the work of Wanda Strauven on the "neo-spectator of the touch screen" is important.

What is remarkable about these debates about spectatorship is that despite the intensity and sometimes even the acrimony of the controversies in this field there is one point on which everybody, regardless of their theoretical framework, political agenda and aesthetic preferences, seems to agree: everybody in film theory seems to agree that the spectator exists.

The figure of the spectator is the *cogito ergo sum* of film theory. "*Spectato ergo sum*" appears to be the epistemological foundation of the main debates in film theory. This may be why the spectator became the target of noted French Anti-Cartesian philosopher Gilles Deleuze. The *Cinema* books, Deleuze himself stated in an interview with *Cahiers du cinéma*, were philosophy books, but they also had two strategic goals in the field of film theory. They were an attack on the two key concepts of then dominant semio-psychoanalytic paradigm in film theory, namely the concept of the sign and the concept of the gaze. While the sign is an abstraction in that it stands for something that is absent, the gaze implies a transcendental subject, a Cartesian *cogito* that tran-

scends the realm of immanence. Deleuze's notion of the image undermines both the concept of the sign and the concept of the gaze: the image is a self-contained entity and not something that stands for something else. But Deleuze's notion of the image also abolishes the gaze by folding the transcendental entity of the spectator into the image.

In the field of philosophy, by the way, Deleuze's critique of the spectator figure echoes a similar attempt by his contemporary Richard Rorty, who in *The Mirror of Nature* offered a critique of modern epistemology centering on what he called, following John Dewey, the "spectatorship theory of knowledge."

In exemplary fashion, Raymond Bellour deflected Deleuze's challenge by suggesting that we should look elsewhere in Deleuze for a theory of spectatorship, namely in his book on Leibniz, *The Fold (Le Pli : Leibniz et le Baroque)*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris 1988). By inserting Deleuze's notion of the fold into the framework of the classical dispositive and by harmonizing the fold with the gaze, Bellour managed to retain the theoretical model of the film experience that hinges on the concept of the spectator.

From Bellour's perspective it is easy to understand why he would make this argumentative move. Theorists like Raymond Bellour or Heide Schlüppmann insist that "cinema" is tied to the classical dispositive of cinema. Moving images that appear outside of that dispositive are, strictly speaking, not cinema. But in order to revoke the right of citizenship of these images in the realm of "cinema" one has to refer to the experience of the spectator and compare two different types of experience, the experience of the dispositive and the experience outside the dispositive. The terms of comparison of these two types of experience are the image, which is supposedly the same yet not quite the same, at least not as an object of experience, and the spectator whose experience is precisely the site where the difference becomes obvious. But in order for the difference to emerge and become palpable there must be a residual notion of the spectator, which binds the two together. To sort out cinema from not-cinema, the transcendental authority of the spectator figure is necessary.

In film theory even at a moment of crisis of the classical dispositive the figure of the spectator remains in place, serving reliably as a logical foundation of inquiries into the nature of moving image, regardless of the context in which it appears, a default point of departure that allows theorists to agree on what it is that they will then proceed to disagree about.

The figure of the spectator in theory is a paradoxical creature: a site of indeterminacy that in itself is not controversial but never ceases to enable controversy.

Considering the record in the field of film theory the figure of the spectator appears to be something much more resilient than merely a concept and both more resilient and less determinate than an "Erfahrungsbegriff" in the sense of Koselleck.

What we call "spectator," then, seems to have more in common with the Kantian pure ego, the subject which is not a thing or a substance or a force, but the logical, transcendental unity of consciousness, the "Einheit der Apperzeption," a form of "pure consciousness," "das sich durch alle Vorstellungen durchhält," which accompanies all acts of imagination and perception. The spectator is, in a sense, a "noumenon," something beyond the realm of visibility and perception, "Etwas Übersinnliches," and at the same time "der Grund des Denkens."

But if the spectator is indeed a "noumenon," an an-historical handle on historical experience, there are only two options to proceed if your task is to clarify the historicise the figure of the spectator.

Either we can follow in the footsteps of Heidegger and call into question the primacy of history. Radicalising Lucian we can argue that the very possibility of history and historical experience appears to be predicated upon the figure of the spectator. History, then, only emerges from a more fundamental structure that presupposes the existence of the spectator.

But what if the spectator, while not quite a concept in the sense of Koselleck and not quite an idea in the sense of Skinner is itself an historical entity, a *noumenon* that merely pretends to be a-historical, outside and beneath

the realm of historical experience but needs to be historicised in the exactly the same way that Georges Canguilhem (and his student Michel Foucault after him) historicised the tenets of modern science and philosophical epistemology?

In order to provide a sense of what such an hypothesis would entail we need to move to a different scene, the scene of the French revolution.

III

In his book *Reflections of the Revolution in France* Edmund Burke insistently exhorts his readers to be appalled and morally revolted by the events of the French revolution. In order to make his exhortations convincing Burke resorts to the metaphor, or rather the model, of the theater. He treats the events of the French revolution as a spectacle and invites to his readers to think of themselves as spectators. As such, as spectators, Burke assumes, they are endowed with an innate sense of moral propriety, and they cannot fail to be offended by what Burkes invites them to witness.

Burke's treatment of the French revolution in terms of spectacle is not entirely original. As historian Paul Friedland has pointed out many contemporary observers were struck by the ostentatious theatricality of the key events of the revolution. In addition Rousseau's observations on the theatrical nature of politics and the political impact of theater or Montesquieu's critique of the overwhelming theatricality of the baroque political displays of Louis XIV provide the outlines for a genealogy of Burke's observations in his book on the French revolution. There is however an important difference between Montesquieu and Rousseau on the one hand and Burke on the other. For Montesquieu and Rousseau, the feeble morality of the spectator constitutes of the problem. For Burke it is unimaginable that the spectator would not be appalled by the spectacle of revolutionary politics. What is striking about Burke's approach is that he trusts in the innate morality of the spectator and addresses the reader in the position of the spectator as a thoroughly moral subject. Not only is history a spectacle the spectator is a reliable judge of that spectacle's moral and political meaning.

Towards the other end of the political spectrum and a few years after Burke, in his 1798 tract *Streit der Fakultäten*, we find Immanuel Kant discussing what he calls the "enthusiasm" inspired in contemporary witnesses by the French revolution. Kant offers a caveat regarding the violent nature of the spectacle of the revolution but then proceeds to justify the emotion of the enthusiasts. What is important here is that Kant, too, discusses the events of the revolution in terms of a theatrical model of engagement and positions the historical witness in the role of the spectator. What is more, Kant, like Burke, has trust in the fundamental morality of the spectator's emotion, and in the spectator's judgment based on that emotion. At the end of the day the only differ in their assessment of the meaning and value of the spectacle of the revolution.

Apparently, then, despite their seemingly incompatible political perspectives Burke and Kant share an epistemology of the public sphere as supported by a spectator endowed with reliable judgment, and of history and politics as a spectacle to be seen through the eyes of an hypothetical spectator and judged by this spectator. Both Kant and Burke, one could argue, are radically modern in this respect: moral judgments are not based on revealed truth as much as they are grounded in grounded in spectatorial affect.

So at the very same time that a group of German historians at the University of Göttingen develop the basic outlines of "*Quellenkritik*" and thus of historiography as a scientific discipline, thus forever complicating, at least apparently, the classical idea of history as spectacle, as re-presentation, a paradigm of the public sphere emerges in which everyone can participate and in which to participate is to be a spectator of history and a judge of its emotional and moral content. The power of this model of the modern public sphere derives from the fact

that in the figure of the spectator that sustains it the two paradigmatic models of human thought, the model of thought as "theoria" and the legalistic model of thought as judgment, coalesce, and coalesce in way that points both to the sources of both models in antiquity and points forward to the various future shapes and developments of the public sphere.

In fact the epistemology of history as spectacle and as spectacle to be judged for its moral and emotional content has, if anything, only been reinforced throughout the 19th and 20th century. Gandhi once famously said that "In order to overcome injustice one must make injustice visible." Fully in tune with that programmatic statement Gandhi's plan for action was to replace military confrontation with political performance art. But in order for that plan to succeed one must assume not only the existence of a Western-style public sphere with diversity of opinion and technical media that translate his gestures into powerful, actionable and widely visible symbolism, but also that there is an audience of spectators who will reliably assume the position of judges of the emotional and moral content of the spectacle provided on the stage of the public sphere, and who will judge this content in a reliably moral, i.e. progressive way. Or to put it in other terms Gandhi performed for an audience that first emerged in the shape that he addressed it around the time of the French revolution and that in more ways than one remained a distinctly Western audience. If there is a modicum of truth in Richard Attenborough's much-criticised biopic of Gandhi, it is that the lead-in to the story is provided by the figure of an American journalist traveling with Gandhi in South Africa to cover his protests. Without the journalist there is no audience, and without an audience there is no effective political performance art.

Incidentally, this solidification of the spectator paradigm supported by the coalescence of the "theoria" and the "judgment" model of human thought in the modern idea of the public sphere goes hand in hand with a revalorisation of the audience and the public. Following a pattern first set by Heraclitus and his separation between the few and the many, the European tradition has tended to valorise the individual and denigrate the mass. This preference for the individual over the group and the mass translates into a distrust of the audience as an amorphous and potentially immoral and irrational mass that runs from Rousseau through LeBon to 20th century authors such as Walter Lippman. But as John Durham Peters has shown one of the most significant shifts that happen in the early 21st century is the shift to a positive view of the public and even a trust in the intellectual capabilities and learning abilities of the mass audience, for which in the realm of cinema the most obvious instance would probably be the cinema of Sergei Eisenstein.

The apparent contradiction between 20th century notions of the mass media audience as an amorphous mass that needs to be named and made visible and the unshakeable trust in the existence of the individual spectator thus resolves itself in a new balance in which the individual spectator in the abstract provides an epistemological handle on the audience in its many shifting empirical embodiments.

Conclusion

In conclusion we can say that while the spectator may not quite be a concept or an idea as envisioned by "*Begriffsgeschichte*" and the new history of ideas it is still imperative that we address the history and historicity of the figure of the spectator, particularly in the light of the fact that our very notions of history appear to be predicated upon the figure of the spectator despite all the best critical efforts of modern historiography. And while neither a history of the concept or the idea of the spectator may provide a key to the figure of the spectator we may still provide, even at this early point, a few outlines for a future inquiry into the history and historicity of the spectator figure. More specifically we need to acknowledge that the cinematic spectator, whose existence all theories of spectatorship non-controversially assume, is engrained in a broader regime of knowl-

The Existence of the Spectator

edge that is marked by what we may call an epistemological split: a split between the *noumenal* and the phenomenological or empirical existence of the spectator, in which the *noumenal* existence is treated as an unshakeable certainty and the *empirical* existence as an object of knowledge and inquiry, an object of knowledge that includes both the varieties of spectatorial affect and the public and the audience in all their fleeting manifestations.

One way of defining the spectator would be to define the spectator as neither *noumenal* nor phenomenal but as the *split* between the spectator's *noumenal* and phenomenal, empirical existence. To study the history of the spectator figure then would mean to study how that split has enabled our experience of history, throughout what, in the light of that experience, we commonly call history.

Which includes the history of cinema.

« Ben educare ». Une micro-archéologie du processus de féminisation des professions de la communication en Italie

Aujourd'hui les mouvements et les organisations [...] qui se donnent pour but général d'analyser les causes de la 'gêne féminine' [...] et d'élaborer de nouveaux contenus et d'« inventer » pour la femme des tâches et des fonctions qui en sauvegardent les caractéristiques spécifiques sont en train de se multiplier.

Inchiesta Schell, 1973¹

Au début des années 1970, Schell charge un célèbre institut de recherche de réaliser une vaste enquête sur la situation des femmes en Italie. Plus de 6.000 interviews sont effectuées avec le but de faire le point sur la question « des femmes » et, comme la citation l'indique, sur la condition inconfortable dans laquelle elles semblent se trouver. L'objectif est de comprendre les façons et les moyens les plus appropriés pour inclure les femmes dans la sphère publique et, avant tout, pour leur assurer une position professionnelle et un rôle dans le marché du travail.

Si nous considérons le cas de l'industrie culturelle italienne, ce processus d'inclusion paraît, à première vue au moins, non seulement possible, mais aussi en bonne voie. Les recherches conduites dans le domaine du journalisme par Milly Buonanno² et le travail – moins connu, mais d'un grand intérêt – de Piera Rella, Francesca Bergamante, Roberto Cavarra et Alessandra Fasano sur les réalisatrices de la radio et de la télé,³ décrivent une entrée massive des femmes dans le système des médias nationaux, à partir de la moitié des années 1970.

Toutefois, ces mêmes recherches hachurent aussi un panorama profondément ambivalent : la croissance du nombre de femmes qui travaillent dans le domaine des médias ne signifie, en effet, ni le dépassement des inégalités entre les genres sexuels, ni, pour les femmes, la possibilité d'avoir accès aux mêmes rôles professionnels et aux mêmes opportunités que les hommes. L'analyse des rôles professionnels des femmes dans les médias, et aussi dans les médias qui sont gérés par l'État (la RAI, Radio Televisione Italiana, avant tout), met en évidence la *permanence d'une hétérogénéité de traitement*, qui se révèle aussi bien sur l'axe vertical, dans les différentes opportunités de carrière pour les hommes et les femmes, que sur l'axe horizontal, dans les différentes fonctions et rôles professionnels attribués.⁴

Il faut dire que ces différences marquent aussi les médias italiens contemporains⁵ et qu'elles font partie d'un processus bien connu, que Pierre Bourdieu avait décrit dans *La Distinction* et qui peut être résumé dans l'équation : féminisation = dévalorisation : dévalorisation du travail féminin, considéré comme le prolongement du travail à la maison ; et dévalorisation des professions à partir du moment où les femmes commencent à les exercer.⁶

Autrement dit, si dès la seconde moitié des années 1970 la présence féminine parmi les opérateurs de la communication devient tellement considérable que l'on parle de « domination » des femmes dans certains domaines, tels que la régie et la programmation radiophoniques,⁷ cette présence ne s'accompagne pas pour autant d'un réel processus d'émancipation.⁸

Cette donnée soulève deux questions de recherche. La première (et aussi la question à laquelle j'essayerai de donner une première réponse ici) est la suivante : *quelles sont les façons et les pratiques d'inclusion des femmes dans l'industrie culturelle italienne ?* L'hypothèse de recherche est que dans ces façons et pratiques-là (dans leurs formes et dans les champs de forces d'où elles surgissent) on peut retrouver les causes de la persistance d'une inégalité de la présence des hommes et des femmes dans les médias italiens. La seconde interrogation, plus difficile et qui représente « la » question, d'arrière-plan, mais la plus importante de cette recherche, est *si l'inégalité sexuelle, la dévalorisation des professions féminines de la communication et la ségrégation des femmes dans l'industrie culturelle ont influencé l'histoire des médias italiens* et ont contribué à définir leurs organisations, leurs formes, et aussi leurs faiblesses. En l'état actuel de la recherche, je ne suis pas en mesure de donner une réponse à cette seconde question. Cependant, comme déjà écrit, elle oriente l'analyse, même dans cette phase du travail.

Pour une micro-archéologie du processus de féminisation : questions méthodologiques

La décision de travailler sur les processus d'inclusion des femmes dans les médias, au lieu d'analyser les pratiques d'exclusion ou de discrimination – une approche plus souvent utilisée dans l'étude des femmes et des professions⁹ – pose trois importantes questions méthodologiques.

Avant tout, la question de la *pondération de la présence des femmes dans les organigrammes des entreprises* et, en particulier, des entreprises de la communication ; la recherche sur les femmes et le travail est, en effet, compliquée par le manque de données statistiques et d'études sur l'occupation féminine. Barbara Montesi parle, à cet égard, d'un « embarras montré par les recherches statistiques à encadrer les activités féminines » et d'une « impossibilité pour les catégories d'analyse d'enregistrer les nombreuses occupations des femmes » ;¹⁰ un embarras et une impossibilité qui marquent la recherche sur le travail en Italie encore pendant toutes les années 1960.¹¹ L'absence d'un enregistrement ponctuel de la présence des femmes dans les médias rend aussi difficile de fixer le point de départ du processus d'inclusion. La seconde question qu'il faut aborder est, donc, celle d'établir *les coordonnées temporelles du phénomène et le terme « a quo » de la recherche*. Sans des données spécifiques sur les professions de la communication, il faudra engager la périodisation générale du processus de « féminisation des professions intellectuelles » qui a été proposée par Maria Malatesta et qui a été détaillée par Giovanna Vicarelli.¹² Malatesta reconnaît trois stades de l'histoire des rapports entre femmes et professions intellectuelles en Europe et en Italie : la période de l'*absence totale*, qui caractérise la situation italienne et européenne jusqu'à 1870 ; la période de l'*exclusion partielle*, qui arrive jusqu'à 1918 et qui coïncide avec l'admission des femmes aux écoles secondaires et, ensuite, à l'université ; et la *phase inclusive*, depuis la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale.¹³ Giovanna Vicarelli a intégré cette périodisation et a ajouté deux autres phases qui mettent en évidence la nature non progressive et non linéaire de la rencontre entre femmes et professions intellectuelles c'est-à-dire : les années entre 1918 et la Seconde Guerre mondiale, qui se présentent comme « une période d'arrêt ou de recul dans le parcours d'expansion professionnelle des femmes » ;¹⁴ et la phase qui s'ouvre vers la moitié des années 1970 et qui est caractérisée par la graduelle assimilation des femmes et des hommes et, en même temps, par le début du phénomène de la dévalorisation des « professions féminines », dont nous avons parlé au début. Dans ce cadre, le processus d'inclusion des femmes dans les professions de la communication se déroulerait dans une période comprise entre les années suivant la Seconde Guerre mondiale et la moitié des années 1970.¹⁵

Si l'on prend en considération aussi les résultats des études sur les femmes et la profession du journalisme en Italie, on peut mieux délimiter cette périodisation et circonscrire le domaine de recherche entre la fin des années soixante et le début de la décennie suivante.¹⁶

Enfin, l'étude des processus d'inclusion des femmes dans l'industrie culturelle italienne *exige l'adoption d'une perspective conjoncturelle*¹⁷ c'est-à-dire une perspective capable de mettre ensemble plusieurs éléments, avec le but d'éclaircir le champ de forces (forces sociales, culturelles, économiques, politiques) dans lequel ce processus a été mis en forme.

D'une façon aussi plus évidente que pour les carrières professionnelles des hommes, les carrières des femmes sont, en effet, influencées par une pluralité de facteurs et, comme Luca Salmieri synthétise en parlant des trajectoires professionnelles des femmes en Italie « les choix qui semblent sans équivoques, en réalité, sont le résultat de différents éléments qui précisent le contexte d'action des femmes et qui peuvent définir, entraver ou faciliter leurs parcours dans le monde du travail ».¹⁸

Femmes, politiques éducatives et professions de la communication

Un facteur important qui sans aucun doute peut avoir facilité l'entrée des femmes dans le système des médias est représenté par les *écoles et les parcours de haute formation dans le domaine de la communication*.¹⁹ Les écoles de journalisme, par exemple, sont en Italie pour les femmes le moyen le plus simple et le plus direct par lequel elles peuvent entrer dans les rédactions des journaux.²⁰ Ces écoles et, plus en général, les écoles de communication sont donc, des instruments et aussi des indicateurs précieux du processus d'approchement et de cooptation des femmes dans les différents domaines de l'industrie culturelle nationale.

Afin de comprendre la conjoncture qui oriente le processus de féminisation des professions de la communication, je prendrai comme point d'observation la Scuola Superiore di Giornalismo e Mezzi Audiovisivi (École Supérieure de Journalisme et des Moyens Audiovisuels).²¹

L'École fondée en 1961 à Bergamo est le premier projet organique de formation post-universitaire dédié aux professions de la communication. Voulue par Mario Apollonio et soutenue par l'Université Catholique de Milan, la Scuola Superiore offre des cours de formation de deux ans, articulés en cinq parcours spécifiques : journalisme, cinéma, radio et télévision, publicité, théâtre. Ici on prendra en considération les quinze premières années de vie de la Scuola Superiore di Giornalismo e Mezzi Audiovisivi, de 1961 à 1975, et en particulier les données sur l'identité des étudiants, les motivations du choix de s'inscrire à l'École (et aussi, souvent, les raisons de son abandon avant la fin des études), les parcours de formation choisis par les garçons et les filles et leurs carrières professionnelles après l'École.

Le but, comme je viens de l'écrire, est d'arriver à détailler un premier ensemble de pratiques, indicatives des stratégies plus générales d'inclusion des femmes dans l'industrie culturelle nationale.

Les données que je vais présenter sont le résultat d'un travail de recherche conduit dans les Archives Générales et les Archives Historiques de l'École²² et grâce à un échantillon d'interviews biographiques aux directeurs, aux professeurs et aux étudiants.²³ En particulier les données sur lesquelles on travaillera ici sont :

- les identités et les titres d'étude des étudiants de l'École : aussi bien des étudiants qui font une demande d'admission, que des étudiants qui effectivement suivent les cours ;
- les motivations qui accompagnent et justifient la demande d'admission et aussi les motivations qui sont présentées pour se retirer de l'École ;
- les mémoires biographiques des étudiants et, en particulier, des étudiantes de l'École.

Ces données seront confrontées avec des données plus générales sur la condition des femmes en Italie dans les années considérées ci-dessus, tirées des archives des principaux centres de recherche sociale en Italie : Istat, Censis, Doxa.

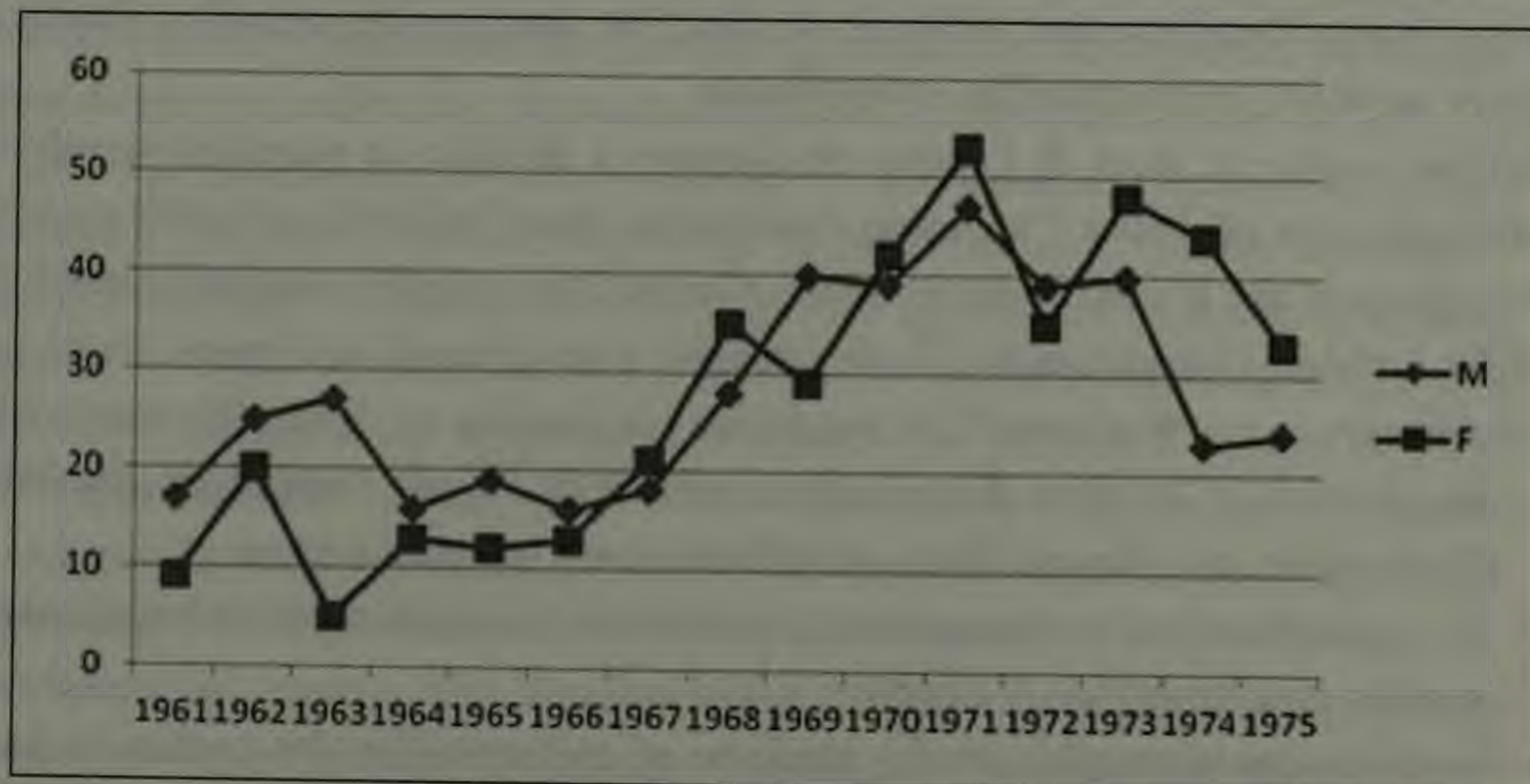
Une émancipation disciplinée

L'analyse de l'identité des étudiants de la Scuola Superiore di Giornalismo e Mezzi Audiovisivi et des leurs mémoires nous offre *quatre premiers éléments de réflexion*.

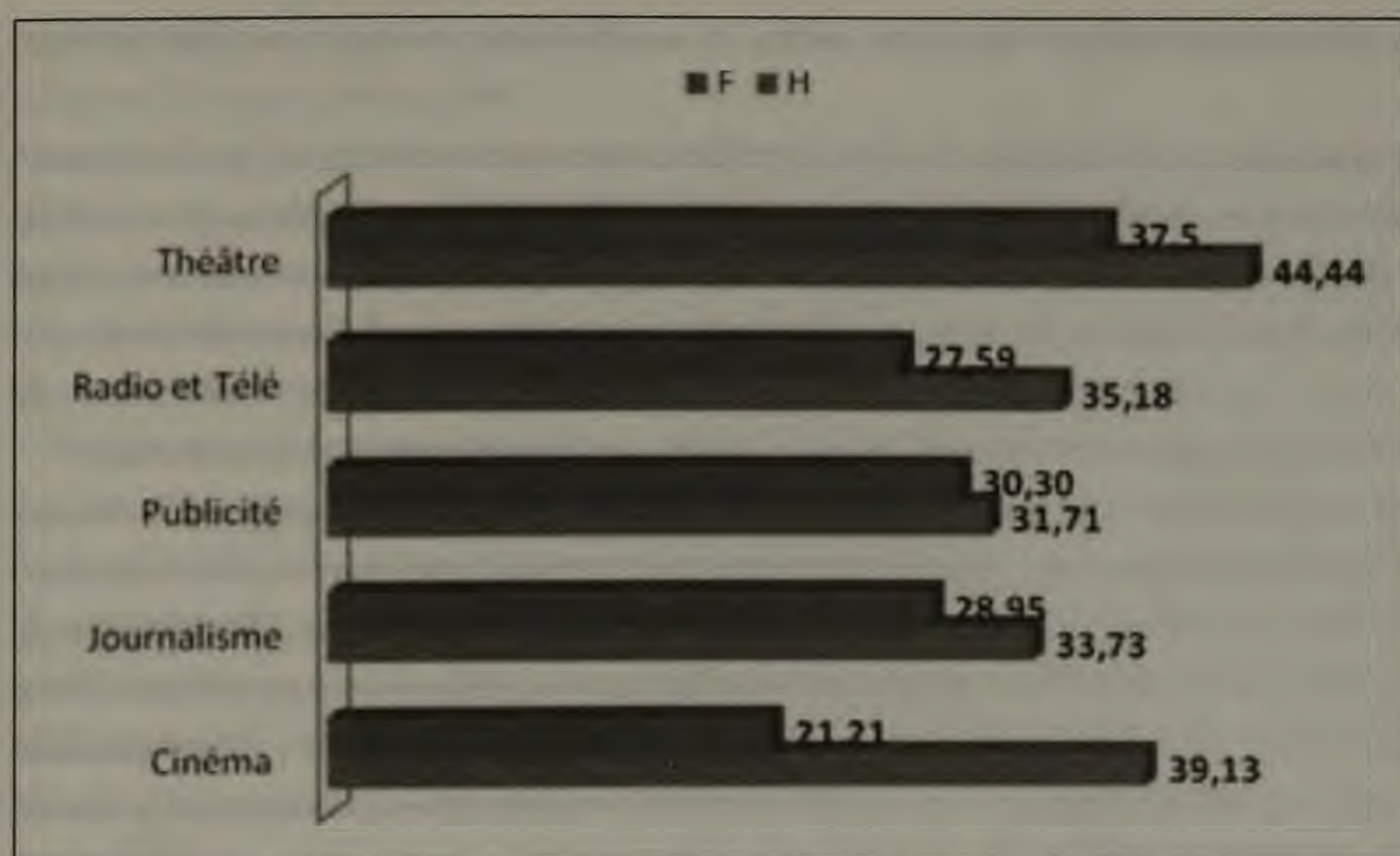
Avant tout l'École se présente comme un espace d'égalité entre femmes et hommes. En analysant les demandes d'admission à l'École et aussi la composition de corps étudiants entre 1961 et 1975 on trouve une situation d'équilibre : des 831 étudiants qui demandent de s'inscrire à l'École, 50,3% sont hommes et 49,7% sont femmes ; ce pourcentage ne change pas si l'on prend en considération les étudiants qui décident effectivement de s'inscrire : 465 pendant les 15 premières années d'activité de l'École, dont 52% sont hommes et 48% femmes. Le deuxième aspect que la composition de corps étudiants met en évidence est la *croissance de la présence des femmes*. Il s'agit d'un phénomène non linéaire et, pour cela, symptomatique de la complexité du procès de féminisation des professions de la communication.

Dans les premières années d'activité de l'École, en 1961, les hommes sont plus nombreux que les femmes. Le nombre des femmes dépasse celui des hommes emblématiquement pendant l'année 1967-1968, quand l'École est déplacée de Bergamo, une petite ville, plutôt conservatrice qui se trouve dans l'Italie du nord, à Milan, où l'école peut puiser à une base plus élargie d'étudiants, et surtout de jeunes femmes. Comme le graphique 1 le montre, la différence entre les femmes et les hommes est petite, mais elle reste constante pendant les années, avec deux seules exceptions : en 1969 et en 1972. Dans le premier cas la diminution est liée évidemment à la situation sociale et politique : ce sont les années du mouvement des étudiants et Milan, et même l'Université Catholique, sont des centres importants de la protestation et donc, pour plusieurs familles, ils ne sont plus des lieux sûrs pour leurs jeunes filles.

La diminution de 1972 s'inscrit, au contraire, dans le phénomène plus général de diminution des étudiants liée, probablement, à la récession économique des premières années 1970 (mieux connue comme la « crise du pétrole ») et qui frappe en particulier ce type de parcours de formation, qui ne sont pas considérés comme nécessaires, surtout pour les femmes.²⁴



Graphique 1. Le nombre d'étudiants et d'étudiantes de la Scuola Superiore di Giornalismo e Mezzi Audiovisivi (1961-1975).



Graphique 2. Le pourcentage de sorties sans diplôme de la Scuola Superiore di Giornalismo e Mezzi Audiovisivi (1961-1975).

Une troisième observation concerne la carrière des étudiants : l'analyse des données suggère que *les femmes plus que les hommes ont la tendance à quitter l'école avant la fin du parcours*. Seulement 29% des filles terminent l'École. Il faut dire que le pourcentage des hommes qui termine l'École est également très faible : un peu plus de 36% (graphique 2).

Si l'on prend en considération les raisons du décrochage, à partir des témoignages des étudiants, des directeurs et des professeurs on trouve, cependant, des motivations très différentes : pour les hommes, le début du travail est la cause, la plus fréquente, de l'abandon de l'École ; pour les femmes il y a, au contraire, un ensemble plus vaste de causes et, avant tout, la difficulté à combiner les activités d'étude et la famille. C'est intéressant d'observer, en plus, que le décrochage féminin le plus élevé est enregistré dans les parcours où la présence des hommes est plus massive – par exemple le parcours du cinéma – et dans lesquels – on peut supposer – les vieilles logiques discriminatoires peuvent plus facilement se reproduire.

Le phénomène du décrochage féminin peut être expliqué aussi par rapport aux attentes des filles à l'égard de l'École. *Les interviews biographiques* avec les étudiants de l'école et, indirectement, les témoignages des directeurs et des professeurs *montrent trois aspects*, trois expériences récurrentes qui, d'un certain point de vue, définissent le chiffre du chemin d'inclusion des femmes dans les professions de la communication.

La première caractéristique est la *nature compensatoire de l'École*. Pour beaucoup de filles la Scuola Superiore di Giornalismo e Mezzi Audiovisivi est, avant tout, une occasion d'enrichissement personnel, à côté d'une profession – celle de l'enseignement, avant tout – déjà en cours et souvent, bien aimée, mais qui dessine un horizon de vie trop petit pour les nouvelles attentes de ces jeunes femmes. Les recherches menées par le CENSIS dans ces années-là confirment cela, en décrivant le changement de la perception sociale des professions d'enseignement – ce qu'on a déjà décrit comme le phénomène de dévalorisation des professions et la recherche, surtout par les femmes, de nouvelles stimulations et opportunités.²⁵

Une deuxième caractéristique, moins explicite, mais présente dans les mémoires de plusieurs étudiantes est l'association entre l'École et *le besoin d'évasion*. L'école sublime dans une forme acceptable – et compatible avec la condition de femme mariée d'une large partie des étudiantes – le désir d'émancipation et de changement.²⁶ S'inscrire à l'École est, d'un certain point de vue, un geste subversif par rapport au modèle féminin de l'époque : un investissement sur soi-même et pas seulement sur la famille, un acte d'affirmation personnelle,

mais qui ne donne lieu ni à un changement effectif du statut social, ni en effet à un changement du rôle professionnel.

Enfin, bien que rarement, il y a aussi des cas où le choix de l'école est lié à une vraie *recherche de professionnalisation* ; cela se passe plus souvent chez les étudiantes inscrites aux parcours de journalisme et de radio et télévision. Pour ces filles, la mémoire de l'École prend un sens ambivalent. La Scuola Superiore di Giornalismo e Mezzi Audiovisivi est reconnue par ses étudiantes comme un facteur important de croissance professionnelle et d'autonomisation ; mais elle est aussi vécue comme une expérience frustrante, marquée par la perception d'une forte hétérogénéité de traitement entre les hommes et les femmes, en particulier par rapport aux activités de stage.²⁷

Dans ce cadre, on peut observer une tendance qui est *un bon exemple de la complexité des logiques d'inclusion des femmes dans les professions de la communication*. Après avoir essayé le travail dans les rédactions de journaux ou de la radio et de la télé, beaucoup des étudiantes de l'École décident de travailler dans le domaine de la relation presse. C'est un choix significatif : la relation presse est, en effet, un succédané du journalisme (donc une profession d'un certain point de vue déjà dévalorisée) et, en plus, c'est une activité de soin – il faut prendre soin de l'image du client, donc une activité plus proche du modèle féminin traditionnel et, comme je l'avais dit au début, un prolongement de l'activité domestique.²⁸

Je vais conclure. Les données qui ont été présentées décrivent l'inclusion des femmes dans l'industrie culturelle italienne comme un processus articulé, fait de pas en avant et de ralentissements. En particulier, *la micro-archéologie du pouvoir que l'on vient de décrire met en évidence l'ambivalence du rôle des écoles*, qui dans l'historiographie des professions sont presque toujours évaluées comme des moyens de valorisation, mais qui se révèlent ici comme des « lieux » plus complexes, où certaines logiques sexistes tendent à se reproduire,²⁹ entravant non seulement le processus d'émancipation des femmes, mais aussi l'évolution des médias nationaux.

Dans cette perspective, l'analyse que je viens de présenter offre aussi une petite aide à la compréhension de l'histoire des médias en Italie et de leur développement. L'incapacité des institutions (et des écoles de formation universitaire, avant tout), dans ces années, à « capitaliser » l'entrée des femmes dans la sphère publique et le monde du travail a en effet privé notre industrie culturelle d'une ressource précieuse qui aurait pu, peut-être, réduire certaines de ses faiblesses et certains de ses limites.

Notes

¹ « Inchiesta Schell, n° 10. La donna oggi in Italia », dans *Bollettino della DOXA*, XXVII, n° 8-10, juin 1973, p. 79.

² Milly Buonanno, *Visibilità senza potere. Le sorti progressive ma non magnifiche delle donne giornaliste italiane*, Liguori Editori, Napoli 2005.

³ Piera Rella, Francesca Bergamante, Roberto Cavarra, Alassandra Fasano, « Mestieri a confronto nei media: Il giornalista e la programmista-regista », dans *Economia & Lavoro*, XLII, n° 2, 2008, pp. 83-100.

⁴ Une réflexion d'ordre général sur la persistance des inégalités sexuelles aussi dans le système post-fordien est développée par Luca Salmieri (Luca Salmieri, « Dentro, ma in basso. Le donne nel mercato del lavoro post-fordista », dans *Genesis*, VII, n° 1-2, 2008, pp. 63-85).

⁵ Voir le travail de Milly Buonanno (Milly Buonanno, *Visibilità senza potere*, cit.).

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*, Editions de Minuit, Paris 1979.

⁷ Piera Rella, Francesca Bergamante, Roberto Cavarra, Alassandra Fasano, « Mestieri a confronto nei media », cit.

⁸ *Ibidem*. Voir aussi Giovanna Vicarelli (sous la direction de), *Donne e professioni nell'Italia del Novecento*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2007.

⁹ Les avantages d'analyser l'inclusion des femmes dans le marché du travail (au lieu de l'exclusion et de la ségrégation) sont bien synthétisés par Mirella Giannini (Mirella Giannini, « Evoluzione di genere nelle professioni intellettuali. Introduzione », dans *Economia & Lavoro*, XLII, n° 2, 2008, pp. 7-13).

¹⁰ Barbara Montesi, « Donne, professioni, cittadinanza », dans *Storia e problemi contemporanei*, n° 31, septembre 2002, p. 148. Traduction de l'auteur.

¹¹ Ceci est évident aussi dans les recherches menées par DOXA (dans ces dernières années le principal institut de recherche sur l'opinion publique en Italie), après la Seconde Guerre mondiale ; dans ces recherches, alors que les professions des hommes sont détaillées, dans certains cas, de façon même captieuse, le profil professionnel des femmes est invariablement rapporté à trois seuls types : femme au foyer, étudiante, paysanne/ouvrière (voir Mariagrazia Fanchi, « Tra donne sole ». *Cinema, Cultural Consumption and the Female Condition in Post-war Italy*, dans Irmbert Schenk, Margrit Tröhler, Yvonne Zimmermann (sous la direction de), *Film-Kino-Zuschauer: Filmrezeption. Film-Cinema-Spectator: Film Reception*, Schüren, Marburg 2010, pp. 305-318).

¹² Giovanna Vicarelli, *Introduzione*, dans Id. (sous la direction de), *Donne e professioni nell'Italia del Novecento*, cit., pp. 7-26.

¹³ Maria Malatesta, *Donne e professioni in Europa. Le origini*, dans Giovanna Vicarelli (sous la direction de), *Donne e professioni nell'Italia del Novecento*, cit. pp. 29-49.

¹⁴ Giovanna Vicarelli, *Introduzione*, dans Id. (sous la direction de), *Donne e professioni nell'Italia del Novecento*, cit., p. 13. Traduction de l'auteur.

¹⁵ Évidemment, les temps de l'inclusion des femmes dans les professions de la communication ne sont pas les mêmes. L'accès à la profession de journalisme, se produit, par exemple, entre les années 1970 et les années 1980, à la suite d'un processus que Milly Buonanno définit « élargissement du champ de la presse » (Milly Buonanno, *Visibilità senza potere*, cit.), qui rendit nécessaire l'inclusion massive de nouveaux travailleurs, y compris les femmes.

¹⁶ Voir Milly Buonanno, *Visibilità senza potere*, cit. et aussi Loredana Cornero (sous la direction de), *Una, nessuna... a quando centomila? La rappresentazione della donna in televisione*, VQPT-Nuova Eri, Roma 2001 et Id. (sous la direction de), *La tigre e il violino. « Si dice donna »*, a cura di Tilde Capomazza, Nuova Eri, Roma 2012.

¹⁷ Les opportunités que l'approche conjoncturelle offre aux études culturelles sont bien expliquées par Lawrence Grossberg, « Does Cultural Studies Have Futures? Should it? (Or What's the Matter with New York) », dans *Cultural Studies*, n° 1, janvier 2006, pp. 1-32. Sur l'importance d'adopter une perspective plus large dans les études de l'histoire du cinéma (et des médias en général) voir Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, Philippe Meers (sous la direction de), *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity. New Perspectives on European Cinema History*, Routledge, London 2012.

¹⁸ Luca Salmieri, « Dentro, ma in basso », cit., p. 72. Voir aussi la lecture proposée par Salmieri des thèses de Rosemary Crompton sur les rapports entre choix, carrières professionnelles féminines et milieu social et culturel. Traduction de l'auteur.

¹⁹ Sur les écoles de cinéma et de télévision en Italie voir le récent livre publié sous la direction de David Bruni, Antioco Floris, Francesco Pitassio, *A scuola di cinema. La formazione nelle professioni dell'audiovisivo* (Forum, Udine 2012). Le thème de l'enseignement du cinéma a été au centre de FilmForum, 2012: Anna Bertolli, Andrea Mariani, Martina Panelli (sous la direction de), *Il cinema si impara? / Can We Learn Cinema?*, Forum, Udine 2013.

²⁰ Milly Buonanno, *Visibilità senza potere*, cit. La reconnaissance tardive de l'école de journalisme par l'Ordre des journalistes (l'association qui réunit les journalistes italiens et qui, après sa dissolution pendant la période fasciste, avait été reconstituée seulement en 1963, par la loi n° 69 du 3 février) contribue à expliquer la lenteur avec laquelle les femmes accèdent à la profession journalistique, par rapport à leur entrée dans d'autres domaines de la production médiatique.

²¹ Les données que l'on va présenter ici font partie d'un projet plus vaste de recherche sur la Scuola Superiore di Giornalismo e Mezzi Audiovisivi (depuis 1965 renommée Scuola Superiore delle Comunicazioni Sociali), maintenant en cours. Les premiers résultats de cette recherche ont été publiés dans Anna Bertolli, Andrea Mariani, Martina Panelli (sous la direction de), *Il cinema si impara ?*, cit.

²² En l'absence d'un archive numérique, on a procédé à examiner 982 fiches contenant les données des élèves de l'École (ou qui avaient fait demande d'inscription) entre 1961 et 1975. De chaque étudiant on a pris les données personnelles (nom, sexe, date et lieu de naissance) ; la carrière universitaire précédente (le titre du diplôme) ; les programmes de l'école choisie (journalisme, cinéma, radio et télévision, théâtre, publicité) ; la date d'obtention du diplôme de l'École ou de retrait des études. Nous remercions Francesco Comini, de l'Archive Générale de l'Université Catholique de Milan pour l'aide précieuse en cette phase de la recherche.

²³ Les interviews avec les directeurs, les professeurs et les étudiants de l'École sont toujours en cours.

²⁴ Bien qu'on enregistre, à partir de l'année académique 1970-1971, une diminution du nombre d'étudiants inscrits à l'Université Catholique, cette réduction augmente de manière significative l'année suivante et concerne surtout les cursus avec un plus grand nombre d'étudiantes, comme celui de Littérature italienne et de pédagogie (voir les données statistiques sur la composition de la population étudiante contenues dans les publications annuelles de l'Université (*Annuario. Anni Accademici* 1969-1970, 1970-1971, 1971-1972, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, pp. 743-747). Il faut dire que la diminution de femmes depuis 1972 peut être expliquée aussi par rapport à un fait divers qui frappât profondément l'opinion publique de l'époque : le meurtre d'une jeune fille à l'Université Catholique pendant l'été de 1971, qui sans aucun doute eut un effet dissuasif sur les familles italiennes et sur leur décision d'inscrire leurs filles aux cursus de l'Université Catholique.

²⁵ Voir en particulier, CENSIS, « Il processo di femminilizzazione del personale insegnante », dans *Quindicinale di Note e Commenti*, V, n° 107, 1969, pp. 993-1001.

²⁶ Dans les choix professionnels des femmes la sphère privée joue un rôle significatif. Voir Patrizia Gabrielli, « Donne e uomini fra professioni, volontariato, politica », dans *Storia e problemi contemporanei*, n° 31, septembre 2002, pp. 5-14. À cet égard on peut aussi consulter les résultats de la recherche sur la femme italienne menée par DOXA (« Inchiesta Schell, n° 10 », cit.).

²⁷ Le déplacement du contrôle et la discrimination sexuelle dans ce qu'on appelle les professions intellectuelles du moment de la formation (la difficulté des femmes à être acceptées dans les cursus universitaires) au moment de l'apprentissage (l'absence pour les femmes de stages qualifiés) est reconnu dans différents domaines professionnels : de l'ingénierie aux professions juridiques (Elena Spina, « Convegni », dans *Storia e problemi contemporanei*, n° 41, janvier 2006, pp. 187-190; Francesca Tacchi, « Professioni giuridiche ed evoluzione di genere. Avvocate e magistrato in Italia dagli anni '70 a oggi », dans *Economia & Lavoro*, XLII, n° 2, 2008, pp. 31-43; Mirella Giannini, *Evoluzione di genere nelle professioni intellettuali*, cit.).

²⁸ L'accès des femmes au marché du travail se produit en Italie avant tout par rapport aux rôles professionnels qui montrent une affinité avec les fonctions de la mère et avec les tâches ménagères. Voir sur ce point crucial Maura Palazzi *Donne sole. Storia dell'altra faccia dell'Italia tra antico regime e società contemporanea*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 1997.

²⁹ L'ambivalence de l'action des institutions scolaires italiennes dans le processus d'émancipation féminine a été bien analysé par Simonetta Soldani in *Le donne, l'alfabeto, lo Stato. Considerazioni su scolarità e cittadinanza*, dans Dianella Gagliani, Mariuccia Salvati (sous la direction de), *La sfera pubblica femminile. Percorsi di storia delle donne in età contemporanea*, Editrice Clueb, Bologna 1992, pp. 113-135.

"Let Us Save the Heterogeneous Sensible:" Vernacular Modernism vs. Cognitive Classicism in the Historical Turn of Film Studies

Everyone knows that the "historical turn" in film studies is supposed to have provided a sobering correction to the excesses of high theory preceding it. That there is some truth to this well-worn story of history overcoming theory is all too neatly confirmed by the fact that we now routinely refer to such a complex and variegated array of theoretical discourses by a single, homogenous name – "1970s film theory" – which is itself a periodisation.¹ As its own disciplinary energies wane, the historical turn has now likewise become an object to historicize. But rather than render this turn into yet another periodised bloc in a bifurcated history of the discipline, perhaps a more productive aim of such historicising would be to trace how efforts to think cinema's historicity have taken up and transformed the theoretical impasses of the previous period. Various *clichéd* oppositions between reified notions of theory and history (e.g. apriorism vs. empiricism) could then be relegated to the status of mere epiphenomena compared to the deeper antagonisms that cut across this disciplinary partition. Such an approach would shift its attention to the theoretical presuppositions made explicit in the clash between irreconcilable notions of what it means to write cinema as history.

In that vein, this essay revisits the debate between two conflicting paradigms undertaken in the name of history. With David Bordwell and Miriam Bratu Hansen acting, respectively, as their most influential proponents, these paradigms rose to prominence in the field of Anglo-American film studies during the late 1980s and 1990s. What they had in common, if little else, was the effort to fundamentally rework the categories of "classical" and "modernist" as they had come to be applied to cinema in the 1970s under the disciplinary formation now called "political modernism."²

The defining project of political modernism, organized around the political valuation of cinematic form, was to elaborate a set of formal criteria for demarcating the ideological products of Hollywood from various counter-cinemas. That line of demarcation was typically drawn by mapping a number of binaries imported from literary theory and linguistics – e.g., readerly/writerly (Barthes) and *histoire/discours* (Benveniste) – onto the formal opposition between "classical" and "modernist" films. Whereas Cultural Studies responded to this opposition

by more or less jettisoning the categories altogether, Bordwell and Hansen appropriated them as an inheritance ripe for transvaluation.

But their commonality ends there. For while Bordwell and Hansen each sought to overcome the binary between "classical" and "modernist" cinema, they approached the problem from opposite directions and with altogether different consequences. For his part, Bordwell worked to redeem the "classical" as an aesthetic category for film studies and, through a union of cognitive science and neoformalist poetics, developed a broadly classicist method which effectively subsumes the modernist distinction within an "historical poetics" of cinema. Hansen's thoroughgoing historicism, on the other hand, overcomes the classical/modernist opposition from the other side by expanding what counts as modernist aesthetics beyond the hitherto narrowly construed set of high art practices. Her heuristic concept of "vernacular modernism" was designed to encompass the entire sensory experience of media and material culture constitutive of everyday life under capitalist modernity – including the commercial cinema that Bordwell characterized as "classical." The fundamental differences between these two approaches soon gave rise to mutual antagonism and polemic.

This essay returns to that antagonism – some ten years after the polemics it produced reached their peak and died down (if not out) – as an especially illuminating episode in the historical turn of film studies. But rather than attempting a strict reconstruction, my approach will instead be to translate the terms of this debate into the framework provided by Jacques Rancière's recent conceptualization of cinema's status within artistic modernity. Like Bordwell and Hansen, Rancière refuses to "fix a border separating a classical from a modern cinema."³ The important difference is that for Rancière this binary can be traced back to a dynamic internal to the history of artistic modernity itself – or "the aesthetic regime," as he recasts it – in which, he argues, classical and modern conceptions of art coexist in a productive tension. To be clear, my aim here is not to introduce Rancière's thought as an "outside mediator" for reconciling Bordwell and Hansen's respective projects. To the contrary, I want to sharpen and extend what is at stake in the conflict between cognitive classicism and vernacular modernism beyond the disciplinary moment in which those paradigms were originally elaborated.

Cognitive classicism

Although "cognitive classicism" is not a syntagm Bordwell himself uses, I employ it here to stress the essential commensurability between the two major methodological strains running through his considerable body of scholarship: neoformalist narratology and cognitive theory.⁴ That commensurability, as I hope to show, depends upon an understanding of the relation between film and spectator that is precisely captured by Rancière's definition of classical mimesis: "the concordance between the complex of sensory signs through which the process of *poiesis* is displayed and the complex of the forms of perception and emotion through which it is felt and understood...."⁵ From this perspective, Bordwell's designation of Hollywood style as "classical" can be understood as a particular (if privileged) expression of a more generalized classicism governing his entire approach. The essential logic of that classicism – and hence the logic governing Bordwell's approach to the history of cinema – is best captured, I argue, by what Rancière critically dubs "consensualism." One of the claims I hope to demonstrate here is that much of the standard criticism of Bordwell's project as apolitical is, from the perspective of Rancière's framework, somewhat beside the point. At stake, rather, is the precise form of politics entailed by his classicist mode of writing the history of cinema.

But before I attempt this translation of Bordwell's approach into Rancière's framework, it is necessary to briefly delineate its main features in Bordwell's own terms. Initially, Bordwell uses "classical" as a formal category to

characterize the historically bounded system of stylistic norms governing Hollywood productions during the height of its Fordist industrial organization, from around 1917 to 1960. He gave that system its most exhaustive empirical description in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (1985), the monumental study Bordwell co-authored with Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson. At a general level, Bordwell describes Hollywood's stylistic principles as relying on "notions of decorum, proportion, formal harmony, respect for tradition, mimesis, self-effacing craftsmanship, and cool control of the perceiver's response – canons which critics in any medium usually call 'classical.'"⁶ Those generically "classical" principles find their cinematic equivalent in Hollywood's insistence upon a set of interdependent elements: the centrality of individual character's psychological motivations; linear causality; narrative unity and closure; coherence of time and space; and formal patterns of repetition and variation, balance, and symmetry. But as a matter of historical method, Bordwell's commitment to empirical research means that those principles must not be imposed from the top down but can only be articulated by identifying consistently occurring narrative patterns and technical devices in a sufficiently large sample of films. Classical style therefore consists most concretely "of a strictly limited number of particular technical devices organized into a stable paradigm."⁷ Those devices – including, most importantly, three-point lighting, framing of characters in *plan-americain* and medium close-up, and continuity editing – all serve to present the narrative with the "utmost denotative clarity" for the spectator.⁸ Using terms borrowed from Russian Formalism, Bordwell defines narration *per se* as "the process of cueing a perceiver to construct a fabula by use of syuzhet patterning and film style."⁹ In the case of classical narration, then, the role of style is to enable the spectator "to construct a coherent, consistent time and space of the fabula action."¹⁰ Bordwell's neoformalist delineation of classical film style therefore depends crucially upon a certain model of spectatorship. Eschewing the prevailing psychoanalytic and culturalist theories, he turns to cognitive psychology for the model of a spectator for whom classical narration and style would be optimally suited. This is the spectator as an "active information seeker" whose cognitive operations continuously posit hypotheses based upon the framing of "expectations about upcoming events, fit actions into large frameworks and apply schemas derived from world knowledge and cinematic traditions."¹¹ These cognitive operations are solicited in Classical Hollywood Cinema at both the narrative and stylistic level.

It is easy to see how neoformalism and cognitivism would develop in Bordwell's project as mutually reinforcing methods, as research can move between them with perfect reversibility. One can begin from the cognitivist account of a generic perceptual process and then bring it to bear upon a common stylistic device in order to explain how, for example, a shot/reverse shot construction can be perceived by a spectator as spatially continuous. Or one can begin from the other side, proceeding via an inferential method of "reverse engineering" from a formal analysis of the device to the cognitive processes it is designed to solicit.¹² In either case, the overarching aim is positivistic and explicitly non-hermeneutic: the basic question is not, what does a film mean? But rather, how does it work?

The disciplinary efficacy of this union of neoformalism and cognitive theory is readily apparent in Bordwell's powerful intervention into the modernist/classical binary at the heart of the political modernist paradigm in Anglo-American film studies. First, it appropriated the "bad" category from that binary – "Classical Hollywood" – which had become the privileged target for all the prevailing hermeneutics of suspicion in film theory, and put it in the service of a purportedly value-neutral project of formal description. Secondly, it elaborated a theory of active spectatorship in reference to the very features of classical cinema – its obviousness, naturalness, transparency, and so on – that the political-modernist tradition attacked for producing passive, ideologically interpellated viewers. "[E]ven in this most ordinary cinema," Bordwell insists, "the spectator constructs form and meaning according to a process of knowledge, memory, and inference. No matter how

routine and 'transparent' classical film viewing has become, it remains an activity."¹³ From this perspective, the Brechtian conceit that a "modernist" counter-cinema could somehow transform ordinarily passive spectators into active ones is based on a fundamentally misguided conception of what spectators do when they watch *any* film.

Hansen's critique of Bordwell's project is not aimed at this specific intervention into political-modernist *doxa*. Nor does she take issue with the account of Classical Hollywood Style as applied to the historically bounded period of 1917 to 1960. She is even willing to concede Bordwell's claim that, as she paraphrases it, "all the world's mass-market cinemas are based on the standard continuity style pioneered by classical Hollywood."¹⁴ What Hansen profoundly objects to is Bordwell's *explanation* for Hollywood's influence, which explanation she sees as grounded in an essentially ahistorical articulation between a "timeless" style and a "universalizing" account of its reception. For all the historical rigor with which Bordwell *et al.* describe the institutional and aesthetic formation of Classical Hollywood Style, once it is established as a system they attribute its "stability and efficacy," and hence its transcultural influence, "to the optimal engagement of *mental* structures and perceptual capacities that are, in Bordwell's words, 'biologically hard-wired' and have been so for tens of thousands of years."¹⁵ It is as if the ultimate end of cognitive classicism – designed as a means for organizing historical research about cinema – is to cleanse cinema of its historicity. As we will see in the next section, Hansen elaborates her heuristic concept of "vernacular modernism" as a historicist counter-explanation for Hollywood's influence and therefore as an antidote to this problem at the heart of Bordwell's approach.

No doubt there is a considerable "anachronism," as Hansen points out, in Bordwell "asserting the priority of stylistic principles modeled on 17th- and 18th-century neoclassicism" for describing a medium whose formation was perceived globally as the "incarnation of *the modern*."¹⁶ But we should add that for Rancière such anachronisms are part and parcel of the multi-temporal logic of the aesthetic regime. Bordwell's classicism can be understood as one possible fate of a medium whose intelligibility is caught up in the dialectical tension between two ideals of art. Very schematically, we can describe the basic movement of that dialectic as follows: by dint of its technical nature, film appears to achieve the identity of matter and thought that the Romanticist ideal of art had called for; but this "fable" of film as the ideal art form is "thwarted" at the very moment of its realization when the logic of the representative regime returns with a vengeance to make cinema serve the ends of classical mimesis.

To help elucidate where Bordwell's approach might fit within Rancière's story of film's "thwarted fable," it is useful to recall a figure Bordwell and other cognitive film theorists often cite as an important pre-cursor, the German-American empirical psychologist Hugo Münsterberg. Although Rancière stages the dramaturgy of *Film Fables* by beginning with Jean Epstein's *Bonjour cinema* (1921), in principle it would also be possible to stage this same dramaturgy – but in an *inverted form* – by starting with Münsterberg's *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1916). Like *Bonjour cinema*, *The Photoplay* is among the very first works of film theory. And, like Epstein, Münsterberg embraces film's technicity as simultaneously inheriting and fulfilling an idea of art that pre-existed the invention of cinema. As for the nature of art itself, however, these theorists each present an inverted image of the other's ideal. If Epstein's Romanticist dream of cinema is that mute matter will prevail over mind, for Münsterberg's Neo-Kantian aesthetics it is that the mind will be freed from the inertia of matter. If for Epstein the artistic destiny of cinema lies in the triumph of *opsis* over *muthos*, the spectacle of animistic materiality in the image over the causal chain of actions that constitutes the plot, for Münsterberg it lies in cinema's capacity to subordinate and freely structure the material world to designs of narrative.

So alongside the line that Rancière traces in *Film Fables* from Epstein to Deleuze, there is a line he does not trace that runs from Münsterberg to Bordwell, a competing lineage belonging to the same contradictory con-

ditions of possibility for thinking cinema as art. Under these conditions, cinema can be seen to embody two diametrically opposed ideas of art:

*Cinema is the art that realizes the original identity of thought and non-thought that defines the modern image of art and thought. And it is also the art that overturns this identity and rehabilitates the claims of the human brain to its place at the center of the world, from where it can put everything at its disposal.*¹⁷

From the standpoint of the Epstein/Deleuze lineage as Rancière conceives it, this latter overturning of the modern ideal of art represents the profoundest betrayal of cinema's artistic promise. For the Münsterberg/Bordwell line I've suggested here, however, this return of classical *mimesis* is the very realization of film's potential as art. That Rancière's framework can accommodate a method so foreign to his own theoretical sensibilities may be a mark of its strength (or at least its capaciousness), but this is not meant to be an exercise in ecumenical film theory. Despite the apparent symmetry with which Bordwell's classicism fits into Rancière's story of film's thwarted fable, the Epstein/Deleuze and Münsterberg/Bordwell trajectories are not simply two sides of the same coin. Rancière offers a partisan history of the practice and thought of film, albeit an idiosyncratic one. What the filmmakers and theorists he chooses to discuss all have in common amidst their apparent diversity is that they push in myriad ways against the tendency to close down the play of contradictions that constitutes the status of art within the aesthetic regime. In this way, they are "nourished," as Rancière puts it, "by all that thwarts them."¹⁸ By contrast, Bordwell's effort to return the art of cinema to a regime of classical *mimesis* represents a disciplinary will to resolve those contradictions in favor of a stable classificatory system.

Returning now to the cognitive side of Bordwell's project, we can see more precisely how this disciplinary logic of classicism also governs his approach to cognition itself. The lineage of cognitive psychology Bordwell draws upon has its contemporary origins in a break from the behaviorist paradigm within mid-20th century American psychology. Specifically, Bordwell cites the influence of the so-called "constructivist" theories of the New Look psychologists in the late 1950s, such as Jerome Bruner and Richard Langton Gregory, who held that the mind goes "beyond the information given" in order to actively construct perceptual experience out of sensory stimuli.¹⁹ The Neo-Kantian explanation of this process relies on a theory of the hierarchical collaboration between "bottom up" mental processes, which govern sensory activities, and "top-down" processes, which are concept-driven and govern abstract thought.²⁰ By imposing abstract schemata and hypotheses onto the raw information provided by the "bottom up" processes, the "top-down" processes give it a structure and consistency, extrapolating and filling in what is missing.

In Rancière's terms, this theory of cognition describes perception as an essentially "*consensual*" operation. Unfolding what this means requires another brief explication of Rancière's aesthetic thought. At its most basic level, he describes the "aesthetic dimension" of experience as a relation between two distinct modes of "sense" – a sensory given and the sense that is made of it – for which the Greek language had a single word, *aesthesis*, the faculty of sense. On Rancière's reading, Kant's *Critique of Judgment* splits the homonym of sense and sense into the distinct mental faculties of sensibility and understanding. Once this distinction is made, it is possible to posit different kinds of relations between these faculties. For Rancière, the decisive question is whether this relation is understood as "conjunctive" or "disjunctive." The relation is conjunctive – or "consensual," to use Rancière's more general term – "when it obeys a certain order of subordination between faculties, a certain manner of playing the game according to established rules."²¹ A disjunctive or "dissensual" relation, by contrast, "has no rule" and the hierarchy between faculties is suspended.²² New Look psychology's Neo-Kantian theory of "bottom-up" and "top-down" mental processing can thus be characterized as an instance of the former, consensual relation.

Now, if we recall Rancière's definition of classical *mimesis* quoted at the outset of my discussion of Bordwell's approach, it should become clear precisely how this conception of classicism captures the intimate link between Bordwell's neoformalism and cognitive theory:

[T]he concordance between the complex of sensory signs through which the process of poesis is displayed and the complex of the forms of perception and emotion through which it is felt and understood – two processes which are united by the single Greek word *aisthesis*.²³

The consensualist nature of the cognitive-classicist approach is expressed most directly by its explicit affirmation of common sense in the form of what Bordwell calls the "normal and successful action" of everyday mental life.²⁴ Needless to say, explanatory recourse to common sense has long been criticised in the humanities for suppressing the role of ideology. But in contrast to this familiar mode of ideology critique, Rancière's approach suggests a quite different line. Critique for him is never a matter of unmasking an ideological appearance by exposing the underlying reality of its production. The question instead is how the reality of appearances – what counts as common sense – is configured in such a way as to annul or cover over the possibility of a dissensual break from the prevailing distribution of the sensible.²⁵

This Rancièrian line of critique illuminates a surprising proximity of Bordwell to some of his more severe critics within film studies. Perhaps the most common criticism of Bordwell's cognitive classicism is that its purported universalism entails an essentially apolitical (and implicitly conservative) perspective. To take a representative example of this criticism from a Cultural Studies orientation: Robert Stam complains that cognitivism "allows little room for the politics of location, or for the socially shaped investments, ideologies, narcissisms, and desires of the spectator. [...] In cognitive theory, a raceless, genderless, classless understander/interpreter encounters abstract schemata."²⁶ In response, Bordwell and other proponents of cognitive film theory have long argued that this oft-voiced criticism is predicated on a false opposition between biological universalism and cultural particularity. Already in his 1989 article "A Case for Cognitivism" – in many ways the founding manifesto of cognitive film theory – Bordwell argued that the "commitment to *constructivist* explanations in terms of *mental representations* functioning in a context of *social action*" constituted a shared ground between cognitivism and "contemporary film theory."²⁷ In other words, there is a difference of degree rather than kind between Bordwell's notion of "contingent universals"²⁸ and Stam's "politics of location."

Despite the polemical characterizations traded between representatives of these approaches – cognitive theory as apolitical, quietist, or secretly conservative; Cultural Studies as hyperbolic or pseudo-political – from Rancière's perspective they can be seen to occupy the same essential political position. In his treatise on political thought, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (1998), Rancière designates three modes of political philosophy – archi-politics, para-politics, and meta-politics – which each name a strategy for containing the threat posed by the egalitarian anarchy of the demos. It is the second of these categories, para-politics, that best describes the political position that cognitive classicism shares with a culturalist "politics of position" (to use Stam's term). Para-politics is Rancière's term for Aristotle's attempt to counter the radical egalitarianism of democracy into a constitutional order by assigning everyone a proper place. Both of the approaches to spectatorship exemplified by Bordwell and Stam entail a para-politics insofar as they perform a fundamentally consensualist procedure: grounding their order of knowledge in a predetermined relation between a sensory given and the sense made of it. Whether that relation is inscribed in a universalizing account of human cognition or in a particularizing account of social identity makes less difference than the fact that it is presupposed as the basis for disciplinary claims about film's effect on spectators. Both approaches seek to establish, via their con-

sensualist accounts of spectatorship, an identity between cause and effect that will heal what Rancière calls "the aesthetic cut" separating a work from its reception.²⁹

Vernacular modernism

The whole motto of the politics of the aesthetic regime, then, can be spelt out as follows: let us save the 'heterogeneous sensible.'

Jacques Rancière, "The Aesthetic Revolution and Its Outcomes"³⁰

As I've already mentioned, Hansen first elaborated her heuristic concept of "vernacular modernism" as part of a polemic against Bordwell's cognitive classicism in her 1999 essay "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism."³¹ She argues there that, contra Bordwell, Hollywood's global success cannot be explained by the timeless, universal appeal of classical narrative style *vis-à-vis* its optimal engagement of evolutionarily hard-wired cognitive processes. In Hansen's account, "classical" Hollywood films were so successful, both at home and abroad, by virtue of their capacity to provide a sensible mediation of the coeval but uneven experience of modernization across a range of national and urban contexts. For mass audiences across the world, Hollywood produced the first "global sensory vernacular,"³² which she describes in a subsequent elaboration as an "aesthetic and public horizon for the experience of capitalist industrial modernity and modernization."³³ Hansen's choice of the term "vernacular" here is designed to stress the interrelated dynamics of circulation and particularization in this theory of cinema as a global *sensorium*. Partaking in both the linguistic and architectural meanings of the term (though reducible to neither) the vernacular for Hansen names a "paradoxical mode in which senses and sensations of the particular, the aesthetic materiality of everyday life, of places, things, and routines, become mobilized, transportable, translatable, and creatively appropriated in and for different contexts of living."³⁴

Modified by this notion of the vernacular, the second term in Hansen's concept – modernism – undergoes a transformative expansion. The domain of what counts as "modernist aesthetics" now extends considerably beyond the standard canon of high modernist artworks to include all "cultural practices that both articulated and mediated the experience of modernity, such as the mass-produced and mass-consumed phenomena of fashion, design, advertising, architecture and urban environment, of photography, radio, and cinema."³⁵ As a practice of cultural criticism, this far-reaching inventory of modernist objects and practices is directly inspired by the capacious Weimar writings of Siegfried Kracauer.³⁶ Its theoretical core, however, is indebted to Walter Benjamin's transformative appropriation of "aesthetics qua *aisthesis*,"³⁷ which radically shifts the signification of the aesthetic away from the formal and stylistic aspects of art and toward an attention to the plasticity of human sense perception and its constitutive role in the experience of historical change.

It is precisely this expansive conception of aesthetics that Bordwell attacks in his critique of what he considers the pernicious introduction of Frankfurt School thought into film studies.³⁸ In *On the History of Film Style* (1997), Bordwell zeros in on the tremendous appeal for film and media scholars of Benjamin's famous claim in the Artwork essay that human sense perception is radically transformed under the conditions of capitalist modernity.³⁹ "In what sense," he asks, "can we talk about short-term changes in perception, that intricate mesh of hard-wired anatomical, physiological, optical, and psychological mechanisms produced by millions of years of biological selection?"⁴⁰ In this way, Bordwell dismisses the basis for an entire scholarly paradigm he dubs "vision-in-modernity" as amounting to a quasi-Lamarckian theory of evolution.

A number of critics have taken pains to demonstrate the problems with this reductive reading, which is a core element of Bordwell's attack on the so-called "modernity thesis."⁴¹ As a matter of scholarly good faith, I should say that I agree with these critics about Bordwell's dismissive polemics on this question. For the purposes of this essay, however, I am not interested in refuting Bordwell's claim that Hansen's Benjaminian notion of the "mass production of the senses"⁴² imputes human perception with too great a capacity for historical mutability. To the contrary, the question to ask in a Rancièrian vein is whether this mode of historicism assumes too modest a capacity. Or, to translate it more precisely into Rancière's own terms, the question is whether the conception of aesthetics at the heart of "vernacular modernism" admits the possibility of dissensus. The danger of this mode of historicizing is that "modernity" will become the hermeneutic horizon for all aesthetic experience in such a way that it inscribes a fixed relation between any sensory given and the sense that is made of it. This is a danger Hansen seems acutely aware of and that her painstaking conceptualization of the "vernacular" is meant to guard against.

Whereas I have argued that Bordwell's project represents the persistence of classicism in the midst of the aesthetic revolution that sought to overcome it, Hansen's "vernacular modernism" can be seen as largely consequent with the logic of that revolution – not least in its very opposition to Bordwell's classicism. But the Rancièrian interpretation of "vernacular modernism" also illuminates a basic ambivalence in the concept with the respect to cinema's status as art. Far from being a flaw or inconsistency internal to the concept itself, that ambivalence can be read as a faithful expression of the contradictory conditions of possibility for thinking the relation between art and politics in modernity. Rancière describes that contradiction in terms of the clash between two declarations of art's fate:

*The whole history of art forms and of the politics of aesthetics in the aesthetic regime of art could be staged as the clash of these two formulae: a new life needs a new art; the new life does not need art.*⁴³

On the one hand, the heuristic of "vernacular modernism" expresses the second of these formulae inasmuch as its expansion of modernist aesthetics disperses the specificity of art into an expanded field of cultural practices. Modern life no longer needs a separate cultural domain designated as art because the new function of art – to articulate and mediate the "experience of modernity" – is assumed by an entire array of cultural practices (including, as noted above, fashion, design, advertising, architecture, photography, radio, and cinema). On the other hand, "vernacular modernism" expresses the first formula insofar as it privileges cinema as the very emblem of modernity in the cultural sphere. Modern life needs the new art of cinema because of its singular capacity to accustom the senses of spectators to the shocks of modernity and train them in the mode of distracted but critical reception necessary to living in it. In a single stroke, "vernacular modernism" at once relegates cinema to the role of one modern cultural practice among others *and* elevates it to the status of modernity's master medium by virtue of its ability to mediate the sensible experience of all of those other practices without reducing their heterogeneity.

Seen as the privileged medium for this vernacular sensorium, cinema is the 20th century art form most capable of putting into practice the motto Rancière imputes to the politics of the aesthetic regime: "let us save the 'heterogeneous sensible.'"⁴⁴ It can only achieve this new vocation for art, however, by dissolving its very specificity as art. This is the dialectical tension that keeps the two contradictory formulae – a new life needs a new art, the new life does not need art – in play. If there is a critique suggested by the foregoing translation of Hansen's "vernacular modernism" into Rancière's conceptualization of the aesthetic regime, it is that it enacts that tension without thematising it as such.

Conclusion

To be sure, the research paradigms set out by both Bordwell and Hansen have each, in their own way, been immensely productive for film studies scholarship.⁴⁵ Just as obvious is that Rancière's approach promises nothing like a competing disciplinary paradigm. Indeed, it is self-avowedly a-disciplinary, even anti-disciplinary. What Rancière does offer, however, is a certain mode of critique in the Kantian sense, one that thinks the conditions of possibility for critical discourse and artistic practice. What distinguishes Rancière's mode of critique, however, is that he refuses to substantialise those conditions as the positive ground for disciplinary knowledge. The aim, rather, is to trace how certain claims made in the name of disciplinary knowledge retroactively construct the grounds for verifying those claims. As we've seen, there is for Rancière a fundamental distinction between two ways of performing that operation: consensual and dissensual. The latter way seeks to construct a scene that admits the possibility of being cracked open from the inside. With respect to thinking history, Rancière's notion of dissensus is very close to the Nietzschean idea of "untimeliness." It entails an approach that Kristin Ross has aptly captured in the oxymoronic formulation "historicizing untimeliness." And for all their obvious differences, we can locate the most significant affinity between Hansen and Rancière in their respective efforts to historicize cinema while remaining attuned to the untimely.

To conclude, I would like to suggest how this affinity at the theoretical level is also discernible in Hansen's and Rancière's respective practices of writing history, by pointing to a small but significant moment in Hansen's first book on film, *Babel and Babylon* (1991). Hansen opens the book with an overlooked episode in the history of early cinema and spectatorship. This episode concerns the exhibition of one of the first full-length film programs, *The Corbett-Fitzsimmons Fight*, a 1897 Veriscope film of a heavyweight prizefight, which ran for weeks in major American cities. Hansen notes how reviewers at the time were astonished to find that the shows were heavily attended by women, who made up as much as 60 percent of the spectators. "Unlike live prizefights with their all-male clientele," Hansen writes, "the cinematic mediation of the event gave women access to a spectacle from which they traditionally had been excluded. [...] it afforded [them] the forbidden sight of male bodies in seminudity, engaged in intimate and intense physical action."⁴⁶ In this act of dis-identification from their assigned roles, these women can be seen as the aesthetic kin of a sort to the 19th century French laborers whose writings Rancière discovered during his decade of research in the workers archives. Rather than spend their nights reading the Proletarian Literature written for them *qua* workers (or, at the very least, resting for the next day's labor), these "perverted proletarians," as Rancière dubs them, chose instead to use that precious time to read and write Romantic poetry. Like Rancière's perverted proletarians, the female spectators of *The Corbett-Fitzsimmons Fight* evoked by Hansen are figures of untimeliness who, stepping out of the place and time allotted to them by the history of capitalist modernity, claim an aesthetic experience supposed not to be theirs.

Notes

¹ See Philip Rosen, *Screen and 1970s Film Theory*, in Lee Greiveson, Heidee Wasson (eds.), *Inventing Film Studies*, Duke University Press, Durham 2008.

² David Rodowick is generally credited with coining the term "political modernism" with respect to film theory, and he has written the definitive book on the subject. It is worth noting, however, that on the first page of that book, *The Crisis of Political Modernism*, Rodowick credits Sylvia Harvey with first naming "political modernism" as such in an article she published in the early 1980s in *Screen* on the uses

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of Brecht in film theory. See: D. N. Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology on Contemporary Film Theory*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1988, p. 1; and Silvia Harvey, "Whose Brecht? Memories for the Eighties," in *Screen*, vol. 23, no. 1, May-June 1982, pp. 45-59.

³ Jacques Rancière, *Film Fables*, trans. Emiliano Battista, Berg, Oxford 2006, p. 122.

⁴ In a recent overview of cognitive film theory, Bordwell describes the project of his first major work *Narration in Fiction Film* (1985) as seeking "a rapprochement between narratology and cognitive science." David Bordwell, *Cognitive Theory*, in Paisley Livingstone, Carl Plantinga (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*, Routledge, New York 2009, p. 360.

⁵ Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott, Verso, New York 2009, p. 60.

⁶ David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, Columbia University Press, New York 1985, pp. 3-4.

⁷ David Bordwell, *Classical Hollywood Cinema: Narrational Principles and Procedures*, in Philip Rosen (ed.), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, Columbia University Press, New York 1986, p. 27.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Idem*, p. 18.

¹⁰ *Idem*, p. 26.

¹¹ David Bordwell, *Cognitive Theory*, cit., pp. 360-361.

¹² *Idem*, p. 360.

¹³ David Bordwell, *Classical Hollywood Cinema: Narrational Principles and Procedures*, cit., 32.

¹⁴ Miriam Hansen, *Vernacular Modernism: Tracking Cinema on a Global Scale*, in Nataša Durovicová, Kathleen E. Newman (eds.), *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, Routledge, New York 2010, p. 295.

¹⁵ Miriam Bratu Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," in *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1999, p. 65. Reprinted in Christine Gledhill, Linda Williams (eds.), *Reinventing Film Studies*, Arnold, London 2000.

¹⁶ *Idem*, p. 63.

¹⁷ Jacques Rancière, *Film Fables*, cit., p. 122.

¹⁸ *Idem*, p. 19.

¹⁹ Jerome Bruner, *Beyond the Information Given: Studies in the Psychology of Knowing*, Norton, New York 1973. Qtd. in David Bordwell, *Cognitive Theory*, cit., p. 359.

²⁰ For Bordwell's summary of this theory and its centrality to cognitive film theory see: David Bordwell, "A Case for Cognitivism," in *Iris*, no. 9, Spring 1989, pp. 18-19.

²¹ Jacques Rancière, "The Aesthetic Dimension: Aesthetics, Politics, Knowledge," in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 36, No. 1, Autumn 2009, p. 2.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, cit., p. 60.

²⁴ David Bordwell, "A Case for Cognitivism," cit., p. 12. These actions include "recognition, comprehension, inference-making, interpretation, judgment, memory, and imagination." *Idem*, p. 13. Bordwell as opposes cognitivism's attention to these normal activities to the focus on psychopathologies in psychoanalytic theory.

²⁵ In his "Ten Theses on Politics," Rancière provides a succinct illustration for how his critique of consensus (a logic which dubs "the police") diverges sharply from ideology critique: "The police is not the law which interpellates individuals (as in Louis Althusser's 'Hey, you there!') [...] It consists, before all else, in recalling the obviousness of what there is, or rather of what there is not, and its slo-

gan is: 'Move along! There's nothing to see here!'" Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, Steven Cororan (ed. and trans.), Continuum, New York 2010, p. 37.

²⁶ Robert Stam, *Film Theory: an Introduction*, Blackwell Publishers, Malden 2000, p. 241.

²⁷ David Bordwell, "A Case for Cognitivism," cit., 17.

²⁸ Id., *Convention, Construction, and Cinematic Vision*, in David Bordwell, Noël Carroll (eds.), *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1996, p. 91.

²⁹ Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, cit., p. 82.

³⁰ Id., *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, cit., p. 124.

³¹ Miriam Bratu Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," cit., pp. 59-77, reprinted in Christine Gledhill, Linda Williams (eds.), *Reinventing Film Studies*, cit. See also: Id., "Fallen Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons: Shanghai Silent Film As Vernacular Modernism," in *Film Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 1, Autumn, 2000, pp. 10-22; Id., *Vernacular Modernism: Tracking Cinema on a Global Scale*, cit.

³² Id., "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," cit., p. 72.

³³ Id., *Vernacular Modernism: Tracking Cinema on a Global Scale*, cit., p. 294.

³⁴ *Idem*, p. 299.

³⁵ Id., "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," cit., p. 60.

³⁶ See Id., *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2012. Especially chap. 1, "Film, Medium of a Disintegrating World," pp. 3-39.

³⁷ *Idem*, p. XVI.

³⁸ As a sample of the dismissive tone with which Bordwell describes this disciplinary development – which, it bears noting, constituted one of the major contributions of Hansen's life work – consider the following: "Film academics who began purging their shelves of Althusser and Lacan did not all hurry to the library to crank through microfilm. The empty shelf space was quickly packed with works by Foucault and the Frankfurt School. History, many theorists believed, was too important to be left to the historians. [...] The result was an *a priori*, 'top-down' commentary on film history, whereby theoretical conclusions came to be illustrated by colorful historical examples." David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1997, p. 141.

³⁹ "Just as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over long historical periods, so too does their mode of perception. The way in which human perception is organized – the medium in which it occurs – is conditioned not only by nature but by history." Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, Second Version*, in Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings (eds.), *Selected Writings: Vol. 3 1935-1938*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2008, p. 104.

⁴⁰ David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style*, cit., p. 142.

⁴¹ See Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, Columbia University Press, New York 2001, pp. 101-131; and Tom Gunning, *Modernity and Cinema: A Culture of Shocks and Flows*, in Murray Pomerance (ed.), *Cinema and Modernity*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick 2006.

⁴² Miriam Bratu Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," cit.

⁴³ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, cit., p. 124.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ And, at least in Bordwell's case, we should add film studies pedagogy as well. The two major textbooks he has developed with Kristin Thompson – *Film Art* and *Film History* – have rendered film

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eminently teachable to undergraduates without sacrificing complexity.

⁴⁶ Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1991, p. 1.

“Have We Seen It All Before?” A “Sociomaterial” Approach to Film History

In film and media theory a new “transitory teleology”¹ has emerged that links contemporary media phenomena – at least implicitly – to their alleged turn of the century “predecessors” of the 19th and 20th century. This has led to a kind of “We’ve seen it all before” mood in film and media history. In this paper I suggest that theoretical concepts from the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) be adopted to challenge this underlying “transitory teleology” in film and media history. Specifically I argue in favor of adopting the “boundary objects”² concept, a basic framework based on theory of action. This concept enables us to focus on the “sociomaterial”³ dimensions of media. Understanding film as a *boundary object* that facilitates and at the same time organizes relations and action in society allows us to develop a more precise view on the connections and – probably more importantly – on the non-existing connections between film history and the contemporary film and media scape. In this respect the paper provides for a theoretical concept towards an ecological perspective on film and media history that at the same time emphasizes the instability and uncertainty⁴ of film and media.

Contemporary media and film history

In 2010, the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen screened six film programs entitled “From the Deep: The Great Experiment 1898-1918.”⁵ In the course of the festival, these screenings of early cinema footage became an enormous success. The festival catalogue announced them as purely historical programs but after the screenings the audience expressed a slightly different interpretation. The rumors were, that it actually felt like YouTube just one hundred years earlier; short pieces of moving images, completely heterogeneous aesthetics all mixed up in one dream like flowing program. The only difference to YouTube was that as a spectator you could not change the program and in contrast to the era of nickelodeons and Kientopps smoking was

prohibited, there was no alcohol on sale and the audience did not leave the cinema in-between but watched the film program as if they were attending a 90 minute feature film. Furthermore, the film theatre in Oberhausen was a clean, neat venue with few similarities to the often run-down nickelodeons or Kientopps that quite often were no more than quickly converted corner shops or beer halls. And finally, the audience in Oberhausen consisted of well educated and well behaved cinephiles, not at all comparable with the poorly educated working-class audiences that flocked to the projections of the early cinema era. So if one focuses on these "sociomaterial" circumstances, actually it was not at all like YouTube 100 years earlier. But for the festival audience it somehow felt like that.

To recognize the present in the past or the past in the present is not restricted to film festivals but made a profound impact on film studies in the last couple of years. In 2002 Eric Faden published an article with the telling title *Chronophotography and the Digital Image. Whoa... Déjà vu!*⁶ that illustrates this recent trend in film studies. Here, he compared the aesthetics of the film *The Matrix* to an "almost Muybridge-like looped, repeating image" and concluded with the assumption that "the digital 'new' is actually the pre-cinema 'old'."⁷ This "We've seen it all before" mood can be situated in context of theoretical approaches that became prominent in the last two decades. They were specifically aiming to describe so-called "new media"⁸ in relations to existing forms of film and media. Partially stemming from Marshal McLuhan's claim that the "content of any medium is always another medium"⁹ concepts such as "remediation"¹⁰ try to analyze "new" media in relation to "old" media. In a similar way Jenkins focuses on media "convergence,"¹¹ while Manovich describes the "new" media scape as part of the "computerization of culture"¹² in contrast to 19th century media.

Why film history and what for?

From a strictly historical perspective, to compare two widely distanced time frames such as the situation at the festival in Oberhausen where the "cinema of attractions" was perceived as a forerunner to YouTube would be all but impossible. Specifically if film is reduced to an aesthetic or technological object that seems to travel discretely through time, historians would claim that there is a problem of objectivity and historical precision. From the perspective of film philosophy, a viable option in this clash of scientific cultures is to rely on Walter Benjamin and his remarks "On the concept of history."¹³ He argues that "History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now."¹⁴ Normally, this idea would be used to argue against traditional historical research and its ideal to reconstruct historical circumstances "as they really were."¹⁵ So finally the question would not be: how do we do historical research? But: why do we do historical research? This position is understandable if one puts it into the historical context including the rivalry in the academic sector between traditional ideals of scientific objectivity versus structuralism, post-structuralism, constructivism and de-constructivism.

But the situation has changed. The controversial gap between disciplines that rely on a positivist idea of scientific objectivity and the poststructuralist program has partially faded away. Ideas of post-structuralism successfully entered classical concepts of history, and vice versa. That narrative history is a literary construction has been recognized widely.¹⁶ Not at all surprisingly, non-film historians as well are aware of this fact. So right now we are in a situation where the paradox of de-constructivism becomes visible. These approaches desperately need an object to deconstruct.¹⁷ For a relevant part of film history this "*bad object*"¹⁸ is or was the traditional form of linear or national film history.¹⁹

To complicate matters, the object *film* itself became unstable and blurry. Moving images are no longer bound to the categories film theory has established in the last decades in context of *cinema studies*. It is one of the rare

situations were established paradigms²⁰ are contested, become instable and might be rejected and replaced. Categories such as "cinema dispositive" are no longer capable of addressing vital aspects of the so-called "post-cinematic conditions."²¹ It turned out that these models were only valid for a specific period of time. Consequently, applying these concepts as analytical categories to compare different periods in film history is critical. They are also historical constructions and thus have to be reflected as part of film history.

Altering the object of film history

Nevertheless, the "We've seen it all before" mood is based on the assumption that film studies have gathered heaps of knowledge about elapsed visual cultures, that it is still relevant to understand contemporary forms of moving images, media industries or forms of cultural globalization. In response to this situation a couple of new approaches emerged from the field of film studies. Not at all surprisingly, the epistemological question of how to (re-)define the object of film history became significant. In an article on the relations between film history and historiographic methods, Charles Musser challenged the concept of a "media specific history."²² The recent proceedings of the Domitor conference *Beyond the Screen*²³ focused on the institutions, networks and publics of early cinema. These are attempts to decenter film history from its established definitions of their object of study. Similarly to this idea of a non-film specific history, Thomas Elsaesser was wondering if film history could be redefined as "media archeology."²⁴

Although these are quite heterogeneous approaches they have something in common. They all try to overcome forms of cultural or technological determinism and thus explicitly or implicitly reframe the concept and object of film history. Musser decenters the object "film," and focuses on the interconnections between film and other media. The Domitor proceedings open up the narrow definition of film and cinema as entertainment and analyze its intersections "with realms beyond the world of entertainment"²⁵ such as industrial, educational and scientific film. The turn towards media archeology tries to add the technological sphere of film to the existing paradigms of film studies that basically focused on film aesthetics or on film technology as part of the "apparatus theory."²⁶

Film and media as historical objects

This shift in film theory towards reframing concepts of film history bears some resemblances to approaches from media history I mentioned above that were theorizing links between "new" and "old" media. In this context I am interested in the epistemological question how this situation affects the underlying conception of history in film studies and how approaches from media history address the problem of "transitory teleology." In their concept of "remediation" Bolter and Grusin argue that new media have the capacity to "refashion older media."²⁷ From a genealogical viewpoint remediation can then be identified as "the same process throughout the last several hundred years of Western visual representation."²⁸ In their perspective "film is especially challenged by new media [...] so Hollywood cinema is trying to co-opt our culture's fascination with new media by using digital graphics to refashion traditional, linear films."²⁹ In the case of film, "remediation" is defined as the representation of one medium in another medium. They argue that "a medium is that which remediates"³⁰ and although a "network constitutes the medium as a technology"³¹ they focus on aspects of perception and aesthetics to link "new" media to their alleged predecessors. Here, media are first and foremost understood as visual media that can be traced through history by describing the aesthetic principles they incorporate.

While Bolter and Grusin distinguish between different aesthetics and forms of media others describe the contemporary situation of media as the very collapse of media specificity. Kittler predicted that "a total media link on a digital base will erase the very concept of medium."³² In this perspective media history is perceived as a history of *technical media* that has reached its final stage of *universal computation*. Manovich is mapping new media by analyzing the "computerization of culture" and how this "redefines existing [media][...] such as photography and cinema."³³ Consequently he focuses on "parallels between cinema history and the history of new media [...] the relations between the language of multimedia and 19th century pro-cinematic cultural forms [...] the historical ties between new media and avant-garde film."³⁴ Jenkins forwards a similar argument though he claims that his model of "media convergence"³⁵ encompasses "more than simply a technological shift."³⁶ In contrast to Kittler's and partly Manovich's assumption of a technological rupture between "analog" and "digital" media, he focuses on "major sites of tension and transition"³⁷ that shape our future media environments. Jenkins states that "convergence will be a kind of kludge – a jerryrigged relationship between different media technologies – rather than a fully integrated system."³⁸ He enhances the technological perspective on culture but at the same time states that "we are entering an era where media will be everywhere and we will use all kinds of media in relation to each other."³⁹ To sustain this claim Jenkins puts emphasis on the cultural potential of media and takes the very existence of "media environments" for granted. Consequently, media are perceived as stabilized social practices that are either potential means of connectivity, participation and transparency⁴⁰ or pose a threat for an open and participatory society.⁴¹

Instead of referring to a specific kind of medium for Bolter and Grusin, Manovich and Jenkins a "medium" is an abstract and at the same time fuzzy object. To conceptualize media as objects is even declared as a methodological strategy by Manovich to conduct media history.⁴² In a next step then this object can be categorized by focusing on the technological break between the *analog* and the *digital* or the *pre-computational* and the *computational* conditions. Bolter and Grusin focus on visual objects and track down aesthetic continuities such as "immediacy" or "hypermediacy."⁴³ Jenkins perceive the process of *media convergence* as stabilized socio-technical practices that are analyzed as separated from but at the same time used by society. All three approaches explicitly or implicitly link "old" to "new" media and draw comparisons between pre-cinema, early cinema and the contemporary situation of media. With this methodological reductionism, one can claim that YouTube bears some aesthetic resemblances to the "cinema of attraction" as well as 19th century chronophotography to contemporary animation culture. Consequently this might lead to a film and media history based on the model of "transitory teleology." Furthermore, reducing media to aesthetic or technological objects also isolates these entities from the "sociomaterial" realm that surrounds film and media objects. Similar questions have been raised by Jane Gaines in her article "*What happened to the philosophy of film history.*" She was wondering although "we may be skeptical of narrativized history, there are ways it slips in the back door because of the way we make claims."⁴⁴

To deal with these diverse methodological issues recent media archeology approaches insist "on the materiality, and material ecologies of media objects, systems and processes."⁴⁵ Media archeology started as an attempt to deconstruct existing linear histories of computation and technology.⁴⁶ One way of achieving this goal was to go towards a kind of niche history of (media) technology. Technological dead ends and "dead media"⁴⁷ became interesting as well as experimental forms of archeology.⁴⁸ In line with the tradition of media archeology scholars argue to focus on "radical materialism"⁴⁹ and aspects of media ecology to be able to describe the "non-cultural, non-narrative and the machinic"⁵⁰ in media history.

These aspects have also been explored by system theory. Here, the non-cultural non-narrative and the machinic is not only understood as materialistic effects but also as an intrinsic part of the logics of observation. To make claims one has to take into account his own position as an observer and how this shapes definitions of media

objects or the framing of media ecologies.⁵¹ While focusing on film or media objects the *boundary work* that finally results in a medium or an ecosystem is under theorized. Furthermore as Gitelman puts it we have to take into account the ever-lasting discourse on the "newness"⁵² of emergent media and their perception "as instances of both risk and potential."⁵³ So if we want to understand the history of film and media as a "system of transformations that constitutes change"⁵⁴ the very act of observing media and film has to be taken into consideration and to be theorized. In this perspective film and media are part of processes that are disruptive and continuous. But at the same time these processes are as well abstract and concrete because defining media is a theoretical as well as epistemological operation that due to its discursive aspects cannot be traced back to a materialist core. Film and media as "ill-structured solutions"⁵⁵ or "ill-defined"⁵⁶ objects mediate a

*permanent tension between the formal and the empirical, the local and the situated [...]. It is this tension itself which is underexplored and under theorized. It is not just a set of interesting metaphysical observations. It can also become a pragmatic unit of analysis. How can something be simultaneously concrete and abstract? The same and yet different?*⁵⁷

Therefore, I argue to introduce tools and methods from social science that reflect on the construction of objects, not as a somehow separated form of reflection but as an intrinsic part of the methodological design. We have to focus on the boundary work that constitutes film and media as a theoretical, material, economical, technological, political and discursive practice.

Towards an ecological perspective on film (history)

To explore these boundary processes between concretion and abstraction I propose to adopt concepts from system theory and Science and Technology Studies for film studies. STS scholars⁵⁸ that operate within the "social worlds framework,"⁵⁹ argue that besides disruptive elements, there is also consistency in historical developments. They conceptualize this relation as "sociomaterial practice"⁶⁰ and specifically focus on issues of cooperation and action in a historical perspective. It enables us to re-conceptualize the relations between moving images, technology, the spectator and society. This framework shifts our theoretical approach from an object-centered approach to an action-centered approach and enables us to skip the imprecise dualism between rupture and linearity to describe historical processes. Focusing on the aspect of cooperation and coexistence enables us to get a grip on the different shades in the gray area of historical continuity and discontinuity. Moreover, failure is no longer bound to rupture but can be accessed as a productive field for film and media history. In this context I argue to adopt the *boundary objects* concept as a basic analytical methodology for film studies.

The boundary objects concept originated in a historical case study conducted by Susan L. Star and James R. Griesemer on the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology in Berkley.⁶¹ To cover the diverse actors involved in the context of this institution, this case study required a new theoretical framework. The scientists of the museum depended on amateur collectors that were spread all over the country. Although these people were not particularly interested in science, they helped to describe, systemize and collect items for research in the museum. According to Star and Griesemer, they were "from different social worlds."⁶² So from their perspective it was quite surprising that this institution was able to work properly.

This situation bears some structural resemblances to film as an object of study: film is connected to different social worlds as well as to changing technological social and economic circumstances. Nevertheless, film industries such as the Hollywood system have proved to be still quite stable institutions. From the perspective of

business history, an industrial cluster that remains stable over such a long period of time is not the norm but a great exception. So the question remains why was and still is film possible?

To explain such phenomena of stable sociomaterial relations that cannot be reduced to a purely technological or social core, Star and Griesemer developed the concept of "boundary objects" to emphasize the improbability of communication and cooperation in social behavior by taking into account the heterogeneous character of social actors and technology involved. Star and Griesemer define their concept as follows:

Boundary objects are objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites; They are weakly structured in common use, and become strongly structured in individual site use. They have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world.⁶³

To illustrate their concept, they draw on a brief example. From their perspective an archive can be perceived as a boundary object. The archive itself, the building or the collection is a rather sturdy structure. It collects and stores items according to a specific classification system that is difficult to move or change, at least in a short period of time. Nevertheless, one can access it in a quite flexible way. The form of a discrete relational storage system enables a non-linear mode of access. You can access one item without thinking of or relating to all the other items in store. This possibility of individual access guarantees a low level threshold, which is crucial for an object to become a boundary object. It organizes the boundaries between different spheres or systems of society – to use the notations of "system theory." People might have different reasons to access the archive or they are from different social worlds but they can coexist in this boundary object without having to directly relate to each other. Or to reformulate it in terms of media archeology, at the same time there are aspects of rupture as well as linearity. But one can describe them in the theoretical concept of a boundary object that consists of loosely interlinked correlating actions. It focuses on the conditions that increase the chances of communication or cooperation.

The archive example is comparable to the situation of film. Film can be described as a boundary object that brings together different kinds of audiences, different kinds of actors with completely different backgrounds such as legislation, economics as well as diverse technological devices. So if one takes the perspective of a boundary object approach, the announced "death of cinema" is just a small shift in terms of a sturdy but at the same time highly flexible boundary object film.

From a sociomaterial point of view there is no division between social practices and technological devices but sociomaterial practices that can be described as boundary objects. This might be perceived as an insignificant aspect but becomes helpful if applied to the contemporary situation of moving images or the so-called "post-cinematic conditions." Because of the new possibilities of film production and distribution, the alleged rupture between digital and analog film looks quite dramatic if one focuses on the technological objects involved. Obviously something has changed but at the same time much more has not changed at all.

Here, the concept of boundary objects becomes relevant not least due to its ties to infrastructural studies that are concerned with a long-term perspective on "sociomateriality." The boundary objects concept defined as the description of the possibilities of communication and cooperation, bears some similarities with the conception of media as a basic structure of communication. Bowker and Star exemplify the basic principle: a boundary object "is not just wires and plugs, bits and bytes, but also conventions of representation, information both formal and empirical that "deal in regimes and networks of boundary objects."⁶⁴ This approach discloses some similarities to theoretical concepts such as the framework of a "media combine" of vaudevilles, nickelodeons and the cinema deployed by researchers focusing on early cinema⁶⁵ or to the approach of the recent publica-

tion of the Domitor conference on the networks beyond the screen. In the dimension of aesthetics, it bears resemblances to the concept Jacques Rancière has described as an "aesthetic regime."⁶⁶ One can even draw a connection to the idea of "discourse networks"⁶⁷ proposed by Friedrich Kittler.

Consequently, the boundary objects approach poses the question "What actually is the object of film history?" in a more radical way. While media archeology and new film history expanded the focus of research on new forms of media technology and social practices, the social world framework consequently focuses on the in-betweens, the "sociomaterial" relations between entities we normally would refer to as "objects."

Existing approaches to film history, at least implicitly, already addressed this issue. There are resemblances to the definition of the object of film history provided by Michele Lagny:

*Films don't have a history. What does have a history is the film as an object, a piece of celluloid lacquered with secret images, with all its existences and vicissitudes; it is the notion of what films should or should not be, the meanings that have been given to them and are changing according to the time and place of their being made, viewed, enjoyed and used.*⁶⁸

Consequently, Lagny defined cinema as a "micro-environment."⁶⁹ She describes the object of film history as diverse social practices that cannot be reduced to a material core. Thus, her definition of film as an indeterminate and at the same time ubiquitous object overlaps with some essential characteristics of the boundary objects concept.

The boundary objects concept reframes film as an object that is not defined by an essentialist social, aesthetic or technological core but through its relational boundaries. It is a relational concept that emphasizes the differences, the boundaries of the object and removes a "natural" conception of film from film history. What we gain in exchange is an abstract model, a stable but at the same time shifting boundary object definition of film. For Pierre Sorlin "the history of cinema concerns scattered individuals, at best there are temporarily constituted groups of cinephiles" and he continues to define "cinema-going as a social activity."⁷⁰ Here, the boundary objects concept rooted in the theory of action provides links for film history towards certain new fields of study in film theory that recently have been addressed by Francesco Casetti as the decentralization of the viewing experience that ultimately turns "attendance" into "performance."⁷¹ While Casetti argued for a taxonomy that is specified into different categories of modes of "doings," the concept of boundary objects provides more of an overarching theoretical framework for cultural analysis. It enables us to go back in time, to detect and subsequently compare different media or film ecologies and at the same time to avoid the methodological issues of the "transitory ideology."

Conclusion

The "media boundary objects"⁷² concept I propose here is a basic theoretical framework for historical as well as systematical research in media and culture. From this perspective film and media are not limited to provide for the possibilities for communication or to increase the connectivity in a social system. Instead, they can also be conceptualized as structures that stabilize differences and non-significant boundaries in society between systems that do not communicate. Therefore, the *media boundary objects* approach enables a perspective on conducting historical media epistemology that also focuses on the long-term implications of film and media as infrastructure.⁷³ While in his *Theory of film*⁷⁴ Siegfried Kracauer described specific *filmic objects* on the screen such as certain movements, the boundary objects approach would be a concept that tries to reframe film as an object that has the power to stabilize shape and move sociomaterial structures beyond the screen. This can also

be understood as a return to Kracauer's first theoretical works on film that specifically focused on the sociological dimension of film as a cultural phenomenon in society.⁷⁵

But finally, returning to the situation at the film festival in Oberhausen where the audience was somehow fascinated by early cinema and their alleged similarities to the contemporary media-sphere. With the boundary object concept, it would be possible to analyze and describe the audience as part of a boundary object that also consists of discourses rooted in the past. In this perspective, the so-called "transitory teleology"⁷⁶ to explain the present through the past would not be just an oversimplified effect of film history but could be analyzed as a productive structure of contemporary film culture.

Notes

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"Have We Seen It All Before?" A "Sociomaterial" Approach to Film History

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The first part of the history of the United States is the period from the discovery of the continent by Christopher Columbus in 1492 to the establishment of the first permanent settlements. This period is characterized by the exploration of the continent by Spanish, French, and English explorers, and the establishment of the first permanent settlements by the English in 1607.

The second part of the history of the United States is the period from the establishment of the first permanent settlements to the American Revolution in 1776. This period is characterized by the growth of the colonies, the struggle for independence, and the establishment of the United States as a new nation.

The third part of the history of the United States is the period from the American Revolution to the Civil War in 1861. This period is characterized by the expansion of the United States, the struggle for slavery, and the establishment of the United States as a great power.

The fourth part of the history of the United States is the period from the Civil War to the present. This period is characterized by the reconstruction of the South, the growth of the United States, and the establishment of the United States as a world power.

The fifth part of the history of the United States is the period from the present to the future. This period is characterized by the continued growth of the United States, the struggle for peace, and the establishment of the United States as a world leader.

The sixth part of the history of the United States is the period from the future to the end of the world. This period is characterized by the continued growth of the United States, the struggle for peace, and the establishment of the United States as a world leader.

The seventh part of the history of the United States is the period from the end of the world to the beginning of the next world. This period is characterized by the continued growth of the United States, the struggle for peace, and the establishment of the United States as a world leader.

The eighth part of the history of the United States is the period from the beginning of the next world to the end of the next world. This period is characterized by the continued growth of the United States, the struggle for peace, and the establishment of the United States as a world leader.

The ninth part of the history of the United States is the period from the end of the next world to the beginning of the next world. This period is characterized by the continued growth of the United States, the struggle for peace, and the establishment of the United States as a world leader.

The tenth part of the history of the United States is the period from the beginning of the next world to the end of the next world. This period is characterized by the continued growth of the United States, the struggle for peace, and the establishment of the United States as a world leader.

Preserving the Marginal. Or: The Fan as Archivist

By sharing information, we become part of a living archive¹

According to UNESCO, “cultural heritage may be defined as the entire corpus of material signs – either artistic or symbolic – handed on by the past to each culture and, therefore, to the whole of humankind.”² This article focuses on those kinds of information that are less likely to be “handed on by the past”³ than others because they hold a marginal position within the public discourse. Their impact may be limited to a certain segment of the public or to a very short period of time, which affects their likelihood to be chosen for permanent safekeeping by established cultural heritage institutions. However, as I will argue in the following, there are forces at work that engage with the preservation of such short-lived or marginal data. Yet, they do not emerge from official archives, museums or libraries. I will concentrate on the role that fandom plays with regard to cultural preservation addressing the aspect of information accumulation and data preservation in fan communities.

Increasingly, fan scholars consider “fandom [...] [to be] no longer an object of study in and for itself. Instead, through the investigation of fandom as part of the fabric of our everyday lives, [...] [their] work aims to capture fundamental insights into modern life.”⁴ Sharing this perspective, I combine observations from my fan-ethnographic work⁵ with recent views from archival theory in order to provide insight into everyday practices of media reception and data preservation, outlining their importance for Academia (namely Cultural and Media Studies), for the Cultural Industries, in particular the market for cultural heritage, and for fan community history and identity.

The collector as fan – the fan as collector?

In 2011, Rancho Obi-Wan, a museum dedicated to *Star Wars* memorabilia opens its doors to visitors for the first time. It hosts the private collection of Stephen Sansweet, an ardent fan of George Lucas’s film franchise,

who over the period of 37 years collected some fifty-five thousand *Star Wars*-related items.⁶ The vast repositories are situated within the buildings of a former chicken farm. The project's website declares:

In October, 2011, Rancho Obi-Wan, Inc., was founded as a California non-profit public benefit corporation to manage the collection. It serves the public through the collection, conservation, exhibition and interpretation of Star Wars memorabilia and artifacts, using the collection to provide meaningful educational, aesthetic, intellectual and cultural experiences to a wide array of audiences and to carry out other charitable and educational activities associated with this goal.⁷

Here, the fan's collection is advertised as an educational good as well as an experience that can compete with the productions of established heritage institutions. In fact, there is even a promise of competitive advantage expressed both in quantitative and qualitative terms:

A visit to Rancho Obi-Wan is a distinctive interactive experience unlike that offered by any other museum, exhibit, archive, or memorabilia collection. The museum houses the world's largest private Star Wars collection and tours of the private collection are guided by owner Steve Sansweet.⁸

Star Wars-fan Sansweet, a journalist, started to work for Lucasfilm Ltd. in the Nineties, where he became head of Fan Relations. He left his fulltime position at the company the very year his private collection went public, remaining a consultant in Fan Relations. In his recent publication *Cult Collectors* media scholar Lincoln Geraghty analyzes the activities of people like Sansweet who turn from private collectors to curators, from fan-consumers to producers. For Geraghty, "to be a collector is to be a fan"⁹ and this conclusion seems convincing given the sociological understanding of a fan as someone who invests significant amounts of both time and money in a long-term passionate relationship with an object of fandom that can be either abstract or concrete, a person or a material object.¹⁰ Any kind of private collecting involves investment of time, emotion, and money, and could thus be considered to resemble fan activity.

While I maintain that every collector is in some way a fan, I do not mean to state that the opposite holds true as well; not every fan is likewise a collector. However, there are aspects of both fan production and fans' communication online that matter to cultural preservation. Addressing fancultural activities in preserving and organizing cultural artifacts, both in material (e.g. memorabilia) and immaterial forms (e.g. data or information), makes it necessary to ask under which conditions we have access to them. As we are dealing with content that cannot be found in official museums or archives, it is also important to ask to whom this information matters and why, a task I will undertake in the following.

Online fan data

I would like to extend my focus from collections of material objects to the gathering, assemblage, and display of information about an object of fandom.¹¹ The latter nowadays, and most prominently, happens in the digital sphere, in online fan forums and on fans' websites, but also, and increasingly so, via social media platforms that are not run by fans, like YouTube, Facebook, or Tumblr, which are accessible to all kinds of audiences. The abundance of data, that media fans share online, ranges from quotations or excerpts from original works, to remix videos and fanfictions to copied and forwarded product information from official marketing sources, and

of course discussions about any of the aforementioned. Consider the following randomly chosen example: on the fan site *The One Ring*, which is dedicated to both *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien, and in particular the respective film franchises, there is an entry that reports about an academic who has studied the physics involved in one of the films' key scenes, the battle between the character Gandalf and a Balrog.¹² The entry "Lord of the Rings physics: how long was the Balrog's whip?"¹³ not only cites the scholar's results and discusses them, more importantly, it provides a screenshot from the film and embeds a video that a fan has compiled from material of the two films in which the encounter takes place (first in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, then, as a flashback sequence, in *The Two Towers*). Like in this case, fan sites often provide bits and pieces of original works and objects of fandom via snapshots, videos, or quotations; as a byproduct of their fancultural engagement with them fans make such data accessible to others. Thus page visitors get a glimpse at the actual object of fandom, Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, in the form of a piece from an original cultural product (here: two filmic adaptations), in an encounter that is contextualized (quoting the scholar's paper), accompanied by appraisal, commentary, and detailed criticism.¹⁴ Activities like these seem to attest a curatorial role to the fan users or administrators responsible of such postings, yet these curatorial endeavors are not tied to an institution, but rather to an informal network of people who communicate and exchange thoughts about cultural products. The importance of networks is increasingly recognized as a factor of curatorial work within official heritage institutions, as a statement by Nancy Proctor, Head of New Media Initiatives at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, suggests:

*In the new cultural economy, the curator's expertise will be judged not just by the depth of his or her subject-knowledge, but also by the extent, diversity, and richness of the network that is engaged in active conversation with the curator, thereby ensuring the ongoing quality, relevance, and future of the discourse.*¹⁵

An interesting concept for analyzing fans' social networking practices was published in the journal *Library Trends*. Melanie Feinberg calls the "personal collections of citations, selected, organized, and described by users"¹⁶ which she considers typical of online social networking, "'expressive bibliographies,' because, unlike traditional bibliography, these collections may be designed to express the unique perspective of their authors toward the material that they collect and arrange."¹⁷ Feinberg praises the merits of such compilations as they "can connect with an audience through a variety of communicative mechanisms, [...] which libraries, archives, and museums, within their institutional confines are less able to pursue."¹⁸

Within the digital sphere fans share and discuss information they deem relevant: celebrity trivia and gossip as well as product reviews. Thus, fan sites, fan forums and -wikis (together with media platforms owned by corporate production companies) form loose-knit networks of (sub)cultural information, where contents are selected according to the tastes and preferences of the participating individuals and of the community. These compilations of information are immaterial, and more elusive than e.g. collections of merchandising items. They can be considered as innovative services made of already existing but newly assembled information, which – in this form – speak to the needs of a specialized audience. Via fans' networks visitors get to access pre-selected product information and metadata contextualizing the given information. Both are at times widely disseminated over various platforms, but they also occur in highly concentrated form, like in wikis.¹⁹ The conditions under which we have access to this data vary: Information stored in fans' forums is often openly accessible, yet several fans I interviewed from German vampire-themed fandoms chose password protection for their message boards to avoid clashes with rights holders of the original works. Many, but certainly not all fan sites provide access to old main page entries. At www.MuggleNet.com, for example, the stored news goes back to 2002. The

site was launched in 1999, so a large number of overall entries are still available. Often sites provide implemented search engines to help users find content. However, a minimum of fancultural expertise is needed in order to operate them efficiently, e.g. by choosing the right search terms.

Motivations

Driven by passion for an object, fans' collecting, compiling, sorting, and displaying of objects or information seems to be mainly intrinsically motivated. A few years ago I stumbled upon a fan site where a young woman had digitized and uploaded several VCR-recorded clips from the Australian TV series *The Flying Doctors* (1986-1993), a format which had been dubbed and broadcast via the German public-service television broadcaster ZDF in the nineties.²⁰ The woman had started making them accessible to others because they were not yet available on DVD and she wanted to discuss the show that she loved with others. Digitizing her old, analogue records and uploading them to her website can be regarded an archival activity inspired by an impulse to preserve and to make cultural information accessible. It is crucial to note, however, that alongside the video material she shared her personal memories, recollections of her teenage years, how she would videotape the show, was teased by her siblings about her obsession, how school sometimes got in the way of watching the show, and so on.²¹ In this ultimately nostalgic context it becomes very clear that archival (i.e. in this case conserving) practices and social practices are closely intertwined in the fancultural sphere. Lincoln Geraghty names nostalgia as one of the main drivers of fans' memorabilia collecting, because preserving things that you liked in the past helps you preserve and perpetuate part of your former identity, to relive and remember fond memories. The personal dimension of both material and immaterial forms of collecting or assembling can be paraphrased in the words of Baudrillard: "what you really collect is always yourself."²² The market potential for nostalgia, i.e. products that cater to people's nostalgic needs, is enormous. Now, several years after I first came across the aforementioned fan site, an official *The Flying Doctors* DVD box set has been released, and we can assume that the online presence of ardent fans like the above mentioned administrator, as well as the fact that her unauthorized offerings were gratefully accepted by others, signaled a demand to the producers and (possibly) precipitated the appearance of the item on the market.

However, Geraghty and other scholars also mention motivators that may be termed extrinsic, as they result from the fan's position within a social sphere and from his or her endeavors to acquire a higher social standing within that respective scene. Marc Jancovich describes how within a cult fandom the possession especially of rare and exclusive items legitimates a fan's belonging to the community as it positions him or her outside mainstream culture: "In other words, in fan cultures, to be a fan is to be interesting and different, not simply a 'normal' cultural consumer."²³ Within the cult film fan scene that Jancovich describes, it is the "very exclusivity and rarity that makes forms of fan's knowledge culturally valuable [...] and their collections economically valuable."²⁴ We can thus interpret fans' curatorial or archival commitment – be it concerned with material or immaterial subject matter – to resemble the striving for fancultural capital, ultimately for fan knowledge, as both the digital data and the material objects they engage with carry desired information that may not matter within a mainstream discourse, but within the "eyes of the relevant beholder," as Sarah Thornton put it in her study of *Club Cultures* in 1995.²⁵

Two German *True Blood* fan site administrators who I interviewed in 2011 mentioned that their website's archive had turned out to be a particular asset. The two had started working on their fan site project in May 2008 without even knowing much more than the title and cast of the vampire-themed TV series that was to be released in Germany no earlier than in May 2009. In 2011, the stream of information that they had posted on

their German fan site since its 2008 launch could still be accessed via a “history” section and search function, thus documenting the beginnings of an online fandom. The fact that the page was so well-equipped drew other fans to it and cemented its administrators’ recognition within the community. Among an ever increasing number of fan sites dedicated to *True Blood* (2008-2014) the fan site’s archive section confirmed its administrators’ legitimacy as it proved they had been fans right from the start.²⁶ The large amount of information they had already assembled before the TV show had gained more mainstream recognition in Germany turned out to be a competitive advantage, as the administrators were confident that no other fan would be able to keep up with what their site had to offer.

Fancultural historiography

Within the fancultural sphere, archival efforts concerning the preservation of fan works have become a strategy to claim cultural legitimacy within a public discourse. The endeavors of the Organization for Transformative Works (OTW) are a prominent example, as several archival projects have emerged out of its framework. A non-profit fan organization, the OTW is concerned with fandom’s reputation and takes on an educational and political stance as it aims to provide “context for outside media, academics, and people new to fandom, in a format wherein fans are in control of their own representation.”²⁷ One of their formats is aimed at preserving “at-risk fannish content”²⁸, like fan sites that are no longer entertained or supported. Another project has recently gained a lot of recognition; the “Archive of Our Own,” which is dedicated to the preservation of fanfiction and fan art, has been mentioned on the TIME list of “50 best websites in 2013.”²⁹ Praising the webpage, TIME refers both to the marginal cultural status of the archived material and to its high curatorial standards:

*Fan fiction is one of the great unsung popular literary movements of the past 50 years, but finding what you’re looking for online can involve sorting through mountains of inadequately tagged and frequently dodgy text. Archive of Our Own makes it easy: it’s the most carefully curated, sanely organized, easily browsable and searchable nonprofit collection of fan fiction on the Web, and it serves all fandoms equally [...].*³⁰

Released in beta-version in October 2008 and still in testing, the “Archive of Our Own” (commonly abbreviated AO3) has been using open source software to provide an infrastructure in which fans can establish their own archives of fannish content they want to share with their peers. Shaunna Moore’s and Sandra Pell’s understanding of “autonomous archives” helps to shed light on some core conditions that differentiate this fan archive from its official counterparts. There is a notion of autonomy to its operations

*in the sense that the group is its own source of initiative and responsibility [...], it acts without deferring to another’s authority (such as the state [...]), and has a public orientation tied less to inclusion in Public institutions than to acting in the intersecting spaces of public spheres.*³¹

The latter is clearly the case with the AO3, as the OTW aims “to serve the interests of fans” – not the state or the general public – “by providing access to and preserving the history of fan works and fan culture in its myriad forms.”³² Nevertheless, the fans I spoke about so far meet a number of criteria attributed to archivists, as they “collect, organize, and maintain control over a wide range of information deemed important enough for permanent safekeeping.”³³ Thus I propose to consider them to be “archivists,” especially of those cultural objects that are discarded or marginalized within the public sphere.

With reference to Moore and Pell we can consider many fans' endeavors as "grassroots archival practice aimed at preserving the heritage of those on the peripheries of society, [...] practices [...] [that] are typically associated with 'community archives'."³⁴ As "community archives" fan archives can also be understood to reinforce shared identity, a "shared sense of who 'we' are,"³⁵ by providing an important common reference for larger fandoms in which participants may never interact face-to-face and which thus share features with "imagined communities."³⁶ In the digital age huge global fandoms like the *Twilight Saga* (2008-2012) community emerge over a few months. Many of their participants never take part in fannish activity outside the virtual world and a few very expensive conventions and other gatherings may be the only spaces where greater numbers of fans actually and physically meet. Enabled by their common media they nevertheless have a shared idea of the group they belong to and the data assembled, shared and preserved by the community play a central role in the manifestation of this identity. So, the very same data we can on the one hand understand as product information and product metadata can on the other hand be taken as information about the respective fandom itself. Projects like the OTW's illustrate how fans make visible and foster a "consensual faith in a shared past"³⁷ while at the same time "legitimizing and preserving fan works for the future."³⁸

Filling archival gaps

The bits and pieces of information fans gather, and the works they produce may be considered worthless by many, however, as they provide contextualized access to objects of fandom, this data may often be the only easily accessible trace documenting a cultural product and its reception. Thus, I argue, they also matter to a wider, non-fancultural audience.

Media professor Aniko Bodroghkozy, a former student of John Fiske, notes a problem that any scholar of Media or Cultural studies will have encountered sooner or later in their teaching career: these studies are challenged, if not compromised by a "presentist" focus. It is, for example, very difficult to teach the classic texts from television studies to today's students. When John Fiske wrote his "Television Culture" in the 1980s, Bodroghkozy notes, he "used current and now largely forgotten TV series like *Hart to Hart* (ABC, 1979-1984) to explain the medium's meaning-making mechanisms."³⁹ As is often the case with theorists of contemporary popular culture, "Fiske gravitated toward both the most ordinary examples of television culture and the most talked about ones."⁴⁰ These shows, however, are no longer running and you cannot rent them at your local video store. They are deemed to appeal only to a niche audience, and thus for economic reasons they are not allowed to occupy shelf space.⁴¹ Hence, how can the average student today know what these shows were about and what fascinated people about them? Some may be rerun on less popular TV channels on Sunday mornings, but there is the overall danger that the classic texts of Cultural and Media Studies become outdated as quickly as the examples they referred to. On the Internet, however, interested students may stumble upon fan sites that provide information which directly stems from the shows' heyday: quotes, snippets or clips of the respective products in question and, even more importantly, context information on how a cultural product was received and "decoded" by its contemporary audience. As for fans, passion does not end if market performance wanes, their engagement may last much longer than a product usually is part of the public discourse. As a consequence, their activities in the digital sphere fill a gap that arises in university libraries: the latter all grant access to Fiske's *Television Culture* for it is considered an important contribution to the academic discourse, but they do not make available the media that Fiske wrote about. Fan networks may provide access to an abundance of information on any object that ever inspired fan activity – if only there is one fan left who cares enough to put it online.

After this appraisal of fan sources, criticism must follow.

Content contingencies

Information retrieved from fans' "archives of affect"⁴² may be unreliable or subject to infrastructure failures and legal measures. Individual decisions as well as human failure may lead to migration of content, often unannounced to outsiders. Some fan sites simply vanish or become abandoned. The formerly very popular *Harry Potter* fan site "The Daily Prophet" (www.dprophet.com) was shut down after a period of inactivity due to the severe illness of its owner, a young fan entrepreneur and activist, whose efforts Henry Jenkins documented in *Convergence Culture*. For many fan sites' owners it is impossible to grant permanent server stability or to cover necessary software expenses due to the sheer lack of financial resources. Only the very popular sites have a business plan. Information which fans provide on platforms they do *not* administer themselves – fan videos on *YouTube* for example – of course underlies the respective sites' terms of service. Many fan works appropriate copyrighted content and as *YouTube* collaborates with copyright holders, these clips often get deleted soon after upload. On video platforms you may have difficulties finding what you are looking for, because the uploaded data is seldom labeled or tagged efficiently and there is no regulating force at work. In order to find specific fan content, it is also important to know common abbreviations and fan jargon: if you are looking for videos featuring the characters Buffy and Angel from the TV series *Buffy. The Vampire Slayer*, you may have to type in the search term "Bangel," while "Spuffy" is the term leading you to fan videos about the relationship between Buffy and vampire Spike. The respective characters' names in their original form do not generate the same hits in search engines and may thus not lead to enough relevant content. In theorizing fancultural archival practices, *YouTube* scholarship has proven insightful. With regard to the particular ambiguity of fan sources as both stable and unstable it holds true what Frank Kessler and Mirko Tobias Schäfer have noted for video platforms:

*Instability results [...] from the rather incoherent and unorganized way in which [...] [information is] indexed, labeled and filed. But at the same time, and in fact by the same token, stability is generated through the organization of content in the form of a dense layer of meta-information consisting of titles, tags and descriptions.*⁴³

MIT collections strategist Marlene Manoff states that "the digital archive is [...] threatened by the obsolescence of hardware and software and by the sheer mass of material in digital forms appearing and disappearing from networks on a daily basis."⁴⁴ Like Kessler and Schäfer, she comes to an ambiguous conclusion: "Digital preservation," she states, "might be an oxymoron," in that it "both fosters and threatens the archival record."⁴⁵ I interviewed a number of scholars working on and with fan sources and they reported to spend a considerable amount of time building their own archives of the respective material they were sifting through, because they could never be sure the data would still be there the next day. Fan fiction archiving has become much more reliable with the *Archive of Our Own*, yet fan authors can always decide to withdraw their work from the platform and public access, so saving a copy, name of author (i.e. nickname or avatar's name) and date of access is vital before discussing such a piece in scholarly contexts. Maria Lindgren Leavenworth, a Swedish literary scholar working on fan fiction, confirms Manoff's position, stating the "sheer amount"⁴⁶ of material to be a challenge: She thought this to "enrich"⁴⁷ her study but also made clear that the ever-expanding material never allowed her to "make general statements, only [to] hint to tendencies in the production."⁴⁸ Referring to Derrida's *Archive Fever*, literary scholar Abigail Derecho defines fan fiction as "archontic literature,"⁴⁹ in that it is "ever expanding and never completely closed."⁵⁰ Derecho aims at erasing the hierarchical gap between fan and official production: "So all texts that build on a previously existing text are not lesser than the source text, [...] rather, they only add to that text's archive, becoming a part of the archive and expanding it."⁵¹ Lindgren Leavenworth also points out the cultural merits of fan cultural preservation:

*fans are great at collecting and distributing information and knowledge about texts which are still perceived to be "low" culture. I am in agreement with many scholars who argue for an archival drive within fans, that is, fans are remarkably often interested in pooling resources, comparing information, and jointly create an archive of knowledge. [...] I would agree that fans are archivists of the subcultural sphere and that their activities can ensure that information about popular culture is not lost. What is interesting to ponder is whether the present crumbling of the boundary between "high" and "low" culture will result in a new evaluation of fans' efforts.*⁵²

Conclusion

When digital technology meets fan activity, access to cultural products is facilitated, even if they have long been abandoned by the entertainment industry. Those who are driven by an intrinsic motivation to preserve data and to make them accessible to others finally possess the means to do so. While information retrieved from fans' online repositories may be unreliable, it also facilitates access to unique ethnographic data helping cultural and media studies' researchers analyze how online communities deal with their respective history and historicity. With their fan work archives, fans strive to perpetuate and preserve a fannish discourse and to represent fans' works as ultimately legitimate forms of cultural activity, within a wider, public discourse that is still perceived to marginalize and pathologize fans.

However, by institutionalizing fan historiography in the form of archives like the *Archive of Our Own*, fans also produce equivalents of established and official institutions of culture and heritage. It does not come as a surprise that some fancultural archival efforts have been criticised as "pursuing aggressively traditional strategies of permanence and legitimation."⁵³

From a cultural-economic standpoint we need to acknowledge that fan archival efforts represent niche market production, like the guided tours that the above-mentioned *Star Wars* fan collector is offering. But they also at times result in collaborations with official heritage institutions. In 2013, the *Depeche Mode Fan Exhibition* travelled the world. For this exhibition a fan collector owning over 10,000 *Depeche Mode*-related items worked together with a curator who essentially helped him pick a selection of 500 pieces that should speak to a fan and non-fan audience alike. In such examples it becomes apparent how the heritage sector has begun to seek more public involvement in curatorial processes, a development which one could also regard as an exploitation of private and leisure activity, of course, depending on the compensation that fans receive for their contributions. Fans' efforts can be considered "archival" in several ways. Fan collecting of material objects as well as gathering of online data follows both a conserving and/or a curatorial principle: while the first preserves popular culture items, the latter stores and displays information that helps either contextualizing the original objects of fandom or understanding their reception at a given point in time. Last but not least, and taking up Abigail Derecho's argument, fans' content production adds to an "archive" of everyday cultural information, an archive that is self-enlarging and never fixed.

While in this article I only focused on culturally discarded information concerning media and their reception, I am confident my argument can be extended in order to include any kind of niche content stimulating fancultural activity. Not only do fans' collections, data accumulations, and exhibitions offer experiences essentially different from those offered by traditional cultural heritage institutions, they also help (re)construct a more wholesome picture of our cultural heritage, a picture that otherwise all too often becomes blurry at the margins.

Notes

¹ Luke Tredinnick, *Digital Information Culture: The Individual and Society in the Digital Age*, Chandos Publishing Limited, Oxford 2008, p. 165.

² UNESCO General Conference, *Draft Medium-Term Plan, 1990-1995: General Conference, Twenty-Fifth Session*, Paris 1989, p. 57.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, C. Lee Harrington, *Why Study Fans*, in Id. (eds.), *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, NYU press, New York-London 2007, p. 9.

⁵ Between 2010 and 2012 I conducted netnographic research for my Ph.D. thesis which dealt with the roles that fans play within a Cultural and Creative Industries context, see Sophie G. Einwächter, *Transformationen von Fankultur: Organisatorische und ökonomische Konsequenzen globaler Vernetzung*, Phil. Diss., Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Frankfurt 2014. Netnography, according to Robert Kozinets, is a "participant-observational research based in online fieldwork. It uses computer-mediated communications as a source of data to arrive at the ethnographic understanding and representation of a cultural or communal phenomenon," see Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, SAGE, Los Angeles, CA 2010, p. 60. For my dissertation I analyzed a number of then internationally popular fan websites and forums (among others: www.MuggleNet.com; www.The-Leaky-Cauldron.org; www.TwilightMoms.com, www.BellaAndEdward.com) as well as German fan sites occupied with either the *Twilight Saga* franchise or the HBO TV series *True Blood*. As the phenomena I was interested in had implications for both the digitally mediated and the analogue, face-to-face sphere, I decided to make use of a "blended ethnography / netnography" approach, combining online netnography with observations at convention spaces and face-to-face interviews, *Idem*, p. 67. Within my research fans' archival roles and endeavors became apparent. This article summarizes a chapter of my Ph.D. thesis and combines its results with new examples from popular culture fan sites that are currently still active (i.e. in December 2014).

⁶ There are no exact numbers available, this one stems from 2009, see Lincoln Geraghty, *Cult Collectors*, Routledge, New York 2014, p. 134.

⁷ See Website *Rancho Obi Wan*, <http://www.ranchoobiwan.org/about/history/>, last visit 17 December 2014.

⁸ See Website *Rancho Obi Wan*, <http://www.ranchoobiwan.org/visit/tour-rancho-obi-wan/>, last visit 17 December 2014.

⁹ Lincoln Geraghty, *Cult Collectors*, cit., p. 185.

¹⁰ I translate from a German sociological publication: Jochen Roose, Mike S. Schäfer, Thomas Schmidt-Lux, *Einleitung: Fans als Gegenstand soziologischer Forschung*, in Id. (eds.), *Fans. Soziologische Perspektiven*, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden 2010, p. 12. While financial investment may not be imperative for fan practices like fanfiction writing, the forms of consumption which often in the first place ignite an admiration that then turns into fandom and inspires fan activity always require monetary investment in one way or another.

¹¹ In accordance with the above-mentioned sociological understanding, such an object of fandom is "external" to the fan, and "publicly accessible [...], either personal or collective, a concrete object or an abstract idea" (my translation), *Ibidem*. So an object of fandom could be the *Star Wars* films as well as their underlying fictional universe, either the novels of *The Lord of the Rings* or the film adaptations, or Tolkien's work in general.

Preserving the Marginal. Or: The Fan as Archivist

¹² A Balrog is a menacing, fiery, and evil creature, that is part of Tolkien's fictional world.

¹³ *The One Ring*, <http://www.theonering.net/torwp/2014/08/16/92291-lord-of-the-rings-physics-how-long-was-the-balrogs-whip/>, last visit 17 December 2014. Similar entries were posted in the news sections of other fan sites, e.g. in the form of fan essays on www.MuggleNet.com, see Sophie Einwächter, *Transformationen von Fankultur*, cit., p. 192.

¹⁴ The fact that the shared bits and pieces of original works are commented upon and distributed in contextualized form is important in order for these displays to be considered fair use rather than copyright infringement – at least in the Anglo-American legal sphere. See e.g. Rebecca Tushnet, "Legal Fictions: Copyright, Fan Fiction, and a New Common Law," in *Loyola of Los Angeles Entertainment Law Journal*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1997, pp. 651-686, for a discussion of fan videos and fair use see Sarah Trombley, "Visions and Revisions: Fanvids and Fair Use," in *Cardozo Arts & Entertainment LJ*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2007, pp. 647-685.

¹⁵ Nancy Proctor, "Digital: Museum as Platform, Curator as Champion, in the Age of Social Media," in *Curator: The Museum Journal*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2010, p. 41.

¹⁶ Melanie Feinberg, "Personal Expressive Bibliography in the Public Space of Cultural Heritage Institutions," in *Library Trends*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2011, p. 589.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ Melanie Feinberg, "Personal Expressive Bibliography in the Public Space of Cultural Heritage Institutions," cit., p. 601.

¹⁹ The above mentioned *Lord of the Rings* scene for example is documented and discussed in different forms: on YouTube via a film clip, on the fan site www.TheOneRing.net (as explained earlier), and on the website of the art community DeviantArt (www.deviantart.com), where a number of fanworks present interpretations of the respective scene. The search terms "Gandalf" and "Balrog" in combination lead to over one thousand artworks, many of which are accompanied by discussions of the films or books.

²⁰ Website *The Flying Doctors*, <http://www.the-flying-doctors.de/>, last visit 17 December 2014.

²¹ See <http://www.the-flying-doctors.de/html/ich.html>, last visit 17 December 2014.

²² Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, Verso, London 2005, p. 97.

²³ Mark Jancovich, "Cult Fictions: Cult Movies, Subcultural Capital and the Production of Cultural Distinctions," in *Cultural Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2002, p. 308.

²⁴ *Idem*, p. 320.

²⁵ Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures. Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1995, p. 11.

²⁶ See Sophie Einwächter, *Transformationen von Fankultur*, cit., p. 152.

²⁷ Website *Organisation for Transformative Works* (OTW), <http://transformativeworks.org/projects/wiki/>, last visit 17 December 2014.

²⁸ Website *Organisation for Transformative Works* (OTW), <http://transformativeworks.org/open-doors-0/>, last visit 17 December 2014.

²⁹ Website *TIME*, <http://techland.time.com/2013/05/06/50-best-websites-2013/slide/archive-of-our-own/>, last visit 17 December 2014.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ Shaunna Moore, Susan Pell, "Autonomous Archives," in *International Journal of Heritage Studies: IJHS*, vol. 16, no. 4-5, 2010, pp. 257-258.

³² Website OTW, "Annual Report 2013," <http://transformativeworks.org/2013-annual-report-0/>, last visit 17 December 2014.

- ³³ Paolo Cherchi Usai, David Francis, Alexander Horwath, Michael Loebenstein, *Film Curatorship, Archives, Museums, and the Digital Marketplace*, Österreichisches Filmmuseum/SYNEMA - Gesellschaft für Film und Medien/Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, Vienna-Pordenone 2008, p. 147.
- ³⁴ Shaunna Moore, Susan Pell, "Autonomous Archives," cit., p. 257.
- ³⁵ Nancy Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2010, p. 86.
- ³⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, New York 1983.
- ³⁷ Shaunna Moore, Susan Pell, "Autonomous Archives," cit., p. 256.
- ³⁸ Alexis Lothian, "An Archive of One's Own: Subcultural Creativity and the Politics of Conservation," in *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 6, 2011, section 1.2.
- ³⁹ Aniko Bodroghkozy, "Teaching Television History: The Textbook," in *Cinema Journal*, vol. 50, no. 4, 2011, p. 185.
- ⁴⁰ *Idem*, p. 189.
- ⁴¹ It is important to note that with the proliferation of online streaming services we may soon experience a rise in availability and appreciation of such niche content, e.g. in the spirit of a retro movement.
- ⁴² Robert Gehl, "The Archive and the Processor: The Internal Logic of Web 2.0," in *New Media & Society*, vol. 13, no. 8, 2011, p. 1228.
- ⁴³ Frank Kessler, Mirko Tobias Schäfer, *Navigating YouTube: Constituting a Hybrid Information Management System*, in Pelle Snickars, Patrick Vonderau (eds.), *The YouTube Reader*, The National Library of Sweden, Stockholm 2009, p. 286.
- ⁴⁴ Marlene Manoff, "Archive and Database as Metaphor: Theorizing the Historical Record," in *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2010, p. 396.
- ⁴⁵ *Idem*, p. 395.
- ⁴⁶ Email interview with Dr. Maria Lindgren Leavenworth, Umeå Universitet, Sweden, 28 November 2012, for the full interview see Sophie Einwächter, *Transformationen von Fankultur*, cit., pp. 308-310.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.
- ⁴⁹ Abigail Derecho, *Archontic Literature: A Definition, a History, and Several Theories of Fan Fiction*, in Karen Hellekson, Kristina Busse, *Fan fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet. New Essays*, McFarland & Co., Jefferson, NC-London 2006, p. 61.
- ⁵⁰ *Idem*, p. 61.
- ⁵¹ *Idem*, pp. 64-65.
- ⁵² Email interview with Dr. Maria Lindgren Leavenworth, Umeå Universitet, Sweden, 28 November 2012.
- ⁵³ Alexis Lothian, "An Archive of One's Own: Subcultural Creativity and the Politics of Conservation," cit., section 2.2.

The first of these is the fact that the United States is a young nation, and that its history is a history of growth and development. The second is the fact that the United States is a nation of immigrants, and that its history is a history of the struggle for assimilation and the creation of a new American identity. The third is the fact that the United States is a nation of diverse peoples, and that its history is a history of the struggle for equality and the recognition of the rights of all citizens.

The fourth is the fact that the United States is a nation of great power, and that its history is a history of the struggle for world peace and the establishment of a new international order. The fifth is the fact that the United States is a nation of great ideals, and that its history is a history of the struggle for the realization of these ideals.

The sixth is the fact that the United States is a nation of great achievements, and that its history is a history of the struggle for progress and the improvement of the human condition. The seventh is the fact that the United States is a nation of great challenges, and that its history is a history of the struggle for the preservation of its values and its way of life. The eighth is the fact that the United States is a nation of great hopes, and that its history is a history of the struggle for a better future for all its people.

The ninth is the fact that the United States is a nation of great responsibilities, and that its history is a history of the struggle for the fulfillment of these responsibilities. The tenth is the fact that the United States is a nation of great dreams, and that its history is a history of the struggle for the realization of these dreams. The eleventh is the fact that the United States is a nation of great faith, and that its history is a history of the struggle for the preservation of this faith.

The twelfth is the fact that the United States is a nation of great love, and that its history is a history of the struggle for the expression of this love. The thirteenth is the fact that the United States is a nation of great hope, and that its history is a history of the struggle for the realization of this hope.

The fourteenth is the fact that the United States is a nation of great faith, and that its history is a history of the struggle for the preservation of this faith. The fifteenth is the fact that the United States is a nation of great love, and that its history is a history of the struggle for the expression of this love.

Colourful Projections: Bauhaus *Farbenlichtspiele* and their Various Reconstructions

From December 2013 until April 2014, there was an exhibition at the Bauhaus Dessau called *Human-Space-Machine*. The exhibition covered the history of the Bauhaus Bühne, an internal theatre where theatrical experiments were taking place. One of the objects on display at the exhibition was a device called *Farbenlichtspiele*. The device was a wooden construction, with handles for the audience to manipulate light sources and move templates, producing coloured moving images on a small screen on the other side of the wooden construction. This device was a reconstruction of *Farben Licht-Spiele* from the 1920s, which was indeed a machine made to produce colour-music performances. However, *Farben Licht-Spiele* was mainly remembered as moving colour projections, and not as a device. Of course, within the context of the exhibition focusing on the body, space and the machine, it was a logical choice to reconstruct the device that in itself produced a direct connection between the body, space and machine. However, this is only one of the creative uses of this device, which had its origins in Bauhaus Weimar in the early 1920s.

In 1923, the play premiered at the Bauhaus Bühne as a collaborative project between Kurt Schwerdtfeger and Josef Hartman. The first performance took place at Kandinsky's home in Weimar in 1922. Soon, Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack also started to work with the device, developing the play into what he called the *Reflektorische Farbenspielen*.¹ Whereas Hartman does not re-appear in the history of this work of art, both Schwerdtfeger and Hirschfeld-Mack would stay closely connected to it until their deaths. What is interesting is that Schwerdtfeger and Hirschfeld-Mack used the device in very different ways. One can even argue that two different *Lichtspiele* were created in the 1920s. On the one hand, there was Schwerdtfeger's *Spiele*, which was actually a *Spiel*, a device to play and experiment with. The other *Spiele* created by Hirschfeld-Mack referred to colour light performances, related to abstract film and colour music. Moreover, both artists made reconstructions of the device in the 1960s, again using it in very different ways.

This makes the *Reflektorische Farben(licht)spiel(e)* an interesting example to investigate. It allows an analysis of

how one and the same device can be used, presented and defined in very different ways, producing media-objects that are the same and very different at the same time.

To understand better these various uses of the *Lichtspiel(e)*, I will approach it from a media-archaeological perspective. Media archaeology is rooted in Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, in which he synthesises his ideas on discourse.² As such, the media archaeological project allows for an analysis of how objects and concepts can produce various meanings depending on the discursive construction of which they are part.³ This construction usually differs from one period to the other, altering the way an object is defined through time.

In his text *L'Ordre du Discours* (1971), however, Foucault also explains very clearly that different discourses also exist simultaneously, for example under the constraint of different institutions. Various art movements can be such institutions, leading to different ideas and opinions about art. For example, at Bauhaus, some members were more attracted to Expressionism, whereas others were clearly more inspired by Constructivism. This article discusses how *Farbenlichtspiele* was embedded in such different discourses, both synchronically and diachronically.

Discourse is also strongly connected to – and maybe even part of – the material world. For this media-archaeological study, this is pivotal. The material side of media objects is strongly related to the situation of their performance. In order to analyse this material side of media-objects in a media-archaeological perspective, the theories on the so-called *appareil de base* and *dispositif*, as introduced by Jean-Louis Baudry in 1970s, have proven very productive.⁴ The various elements of the *appareil de base* of cinema are: Camera, Projector, Screen, Film, Sound, Audience. Of course, for different media this can vary quite a lot. For example, an iPad can be used as a camera and as a screen at the same time. However, the *dispositif*, which is the screening situation in itself, always consists of a place where the images are being produced, a position where they are made visible, and a position from which they are being perceived.⁵ With regard to our case study, first of all the *dispositif* indeed was different from that of the classic cinema Baudry analysed in his texts. Moreover, the two artists Schwerdtfeger and Hirschfeld-Mack used the device and the according *dispositif* in very different ways. Consequently, the case study will show how, with the same device and a similar *dispositif*, a different work of art can be produced, because of how the *dispositif* is used as part of the presentation.

First, let us take a look at what the device looked like, and how the *dispositif* functioned. The *Farbenlichtspiele-dispositif* is very different from the cinema *dispositif* as it was problematised by Baudry. Within the *dispositif* of the *Lichtspiel(e)*, the various elements were not positioned in the same way as in the cinema *dispositif*. For example, the projected objects were placed behind the screen, and not behind the audience. Further, the projections are not made by pulling a filmstrip through a film projector, but by moving templates in front of coloured light sources behind the screen.

Second, when one starts investigating the two different uses of the *Lichtspiel(e)*, what one realises is the different emphases put on various elements of, and as such positions within, the *dispositif*. As a result, I will start my quest with the question: which part of the *dispositif* of *Farbenlichtspiele* was emphasised? After trying to answer this question for the different versions, I will continue to investigate how these material utterances correlated with various dominant discourses and vice versa.

Bauhaus-Weimar

During the Weimar period of Bauhaus (1919-1925), its members were mostly inclined towards Expressionist discourse. The idea of colour projection, in combination with music: colour-music, was very popular during the 19th century. Consequently, the re-appearance of such a device in the Expressionist period of the Bauhaus makes sense. However, within this broader focus on Expressionism, Bauhaus Weimar hosted teachers and stu-

dents who were all embedded in art movements of different origins, and as such they all brought their own discursive framing. As a result, it was a crossroad of various discourses on art, spirituality, romanticism, constructivism, dada, and synaesthesia. This institutional context of diversity of Bauhaus Weimar strongly framed the duality of the *Lichtspiel(e)*.

As I mentioned before, two very different students, Kurt Schwerdtfeger and Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack developed the *Lichtspiel(e)* in different ways. After a brief moment of collaboration, at the very beginning in 1922, they both "took" the device and used and transformed it according to their own ideas and philosophies on colour, light and art. This is reflected in the fact that they gave the performance different names. In 1924 Schwerdtfeger presented the device as *Reflektorisches Lichtspiel* in *Der Sturm*, and in 1957 he presented it as *Das reflektorische Farblichtspiel*.⁶ Hirschfeld-Mack called the performance *Die reflektorischen Farbenspiele* in 1924 and switched to *Farben Licht-Spiele* in 1925.⁷ What is remarkable here is that whereas Schwerdtfeger used singular, Hirschfeld-Mack described the play in plural.

When we look at Schwerdtfeger's ideas and writings on the performance, we notice a strong emphasis on the "making" of the images.

*The Reflektorische Lichtspiel is a synthesis of movement, light, colour, shape. The technical wish is – economical, mechanical movement by the human hand itself as a factor for automatic optics, with the help of electrical, hand-moved light sources – that way a connection between movement and light emerges.*⁸

Accordingly, it is not surprising that, within the *dispositif* of the *Lichtspiel*, Schwerdtfeger emphasised the position where the images are made. This is precisely that part of the *dispositif* that is positioned behind the screen and made invisible in case of a traditional cinema. This, of course, reminds us of the cinema of attractions, where the projector was a novelty and as such was defined an attraction. Schwerdtfeger's device was also a novelty, a new piece of technology that could be considered an artwork in itself. Considering that Kurt Schwerdtfeger was a member of the Bauhaus sculpting workshop, and as such was occupied with shaping matter in space, it is understandable that, for him, the three-dimensional object and the handling of it was the artwork, more than the images it produced.⁹ This way to present the device as a work of art fits constructivist discourse, with its emphasis on the material properties and spatial presence of art.¹⁰ Further, it also clarifies why Schwerdtfeger used the 'singular' form to name the device. To him, it was not the different performances or plays that could be produced with the device, but the device itself that was essential. It was literally a *Spiel*, a device to play with, instead of *Spiele*, a series of performances.

Hirschfeld-Mack used the device in quite the opposite way. In a publication from 1925, he introduced *Farben Licht-Spiele* as follows: "*Farbenlichtspiele*: A play of moving, yellow, red, green and blue light fields, in organically generated gradations developing from the dark into the brightest light."¹¹ Hirschfeld-Mack presented the *Lichtspiele* as visual performance, more than as a technology. For him, the essence of the *Lichtspiele* was in the projected images and not the act of making projections. This corresponds with the way Hirschfeld-Mack's *Lichtspiele* were perceived by the critics, namely as film.

*In the small hall of the concert house, a Reflektorisches Farbenspiel of the Weimar Bauhaus (composition of H.-M.), an abstract film, in which colourful geometrical figures.*¹²

The emphasis on the images instead of the way they were produced is confirmed by the fact that, in the Hirschfeld-Mack performances, the device was hidden from the audience.¹³ Consequently, the comparison between Hirschfeld-Mack's *Farben Licht-Spiele* and abstract film is a logical one, positioning the performances

within the cultural series of projected light producing moving images. The fact that Hirschfeld-Mack's *Farben Licht-Spiele* were programmed and performed within the famous film programme "absolute Film" at the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin in 1925, further confirms this. Here *Farben Licht-Spiele* were shown in combination with abstract films by Richter, Ruttmann, Eggeling, Léger and Clair.

Still, retrospectively, Hirschfeld-Mack did not position his work within the realm of cinema, but clustered film, colour music, and art within the separate domain of colour light experiments. Later, in 1930, he wrote the following about this:

*It is no coincidence that, almost simultaneously, and independently from each other, people worked on the same tasks. For example, in Germany, in film Ruttmann and Eggeling, in colour music László, in Paris Fernand Léger and Man Ray, as well as in England and America, there were artists who, from an inner drive, without knowing of what each other was doing, used colour light in its extraordinary variety of possibilities for their colour compositions.*¹⁴

This also means that he did not position his work within the domain of colour music either. Instead he positioned colour-music, abstract film experiments and his *Farben Licht-Spiele* within the realm of colour light. He even produced some plays that were completely silent.¹⁵ This, of course, does not mean he did not use music or did not feel related to colour music. On the contrary, in 1925, for example, he wrote about the need for musical accompaniment with film: "The timely order of a movement is made understandable more easily and precisely by an acoustic as by an optic structuring."¹⁶

Moreover, Hirschfeld-Mack composed the music for the *Farben Licht-Spiele* himself, aiming at a score for a perfect synthesis of music, light, colour and movement (rhythm). His music was almost old-fashioned in nature, when taking into account what was happening in modern music at that moment. Instead of focusing on these new developments in music, Hirschfeld-Mack's music shows a strong inclination towards romanticism. This is consistent with the fact that colour-music, or his idea that colour-music and *Farben Licht-Spiele* were part of the same cultural series he called colour light, positions his work in the 19th century romantic tradition of the colour organ, and the search for synaesthesia in art. One of the main disciples of synaesthesia in art at Bauhaus Weimar was Kandinsky, who, unsurprisingly, was also partly involved with the *Farben Licht-Spiele*. First of all, because the first performance of it took place in his house, but also because on the 4 February 1925 he gave an lecture on synaesthesia, movement, colour and music as an introduction to a performance by Hirschfeld-Mack in Leipzig.¹⁷ Further, in 1930, Hirschfeld-Mack also mentioned Kandinsky's ideas on colour and shapes in his article *Farbenlichtspiele* from 1930, stating that yellow should be connected to the triangular, red to the square and blue to the circle.¹⁸

Overall, we can state that two different art works were created. One was an ingenious new technology creating abstract coloured moving images in a way that had not been seen before. The other work of art was the result of this, the images that appeared on the screen, and that affected the brain and perception of the audience.

When and where was Farbenlichtspiele: Bauhaus archive, 1960s

What is interesting now is that both *Die Farben Licht-Spiele* and *Das Reflectorisches (Farb)Lichtspiel* re-emerged after World War II. In 1964 Hirschfeld-Mack was asked by Hans Maria Wingler to reconstruct his *Farbenlichtspiele* and perform them at the Bauhaus Archiv in Darmstadt. Wingler, who in 1962 would publish a monograph on the history of Bauhaus, founded this archive in 1960. The Bauhaus Archiv retrospectively tried to collect as many archival objects connected to the Bauhaus from the 1920s as possible. In addition, it organ-

ised expositions, publications and presentations. For example, in June 1963 they organised an exposition showing works by Hirschfeld-Mack, followed a year later by a presentation of a reconstruction of *Die Farben Licht-Spiele*. Unfortunately, not much is left of his reconstruction. Some notes on how to re-build the device, scores used for the performance and sheet music of three musical pieces from the 1920s and one "Sonatine" from 1963. The programme of the reconstructed *Farben Licht-Spiele* contained four titles from the 1920s (three with and one without music), and one – the last title – from 1963.¹⁹

In all, the sources show us that Hirschfeld-Mack intended to produce a reconstruction of the performances the way he presented them in the 1920s. In addition, he wrote one new musical piece for the presentation, also giving the performance a touch of newness and actuality. The emphasis on the historical reconstruction fits the institutional context: the Bauhaus Archiv that was founded and directed by a historian interested in the history of Bauhaus and the art works and other archival objects related to it.

Pädagogische Hochschule Alfeld/Leine - Schwerdtfeger

In 1966, a year after Hirschfeld-Mack died, the *Lichtspiel* was performed again at the Bauhaus Archiv. This time, it was Schwerdtfeger who presented a reconstruction. In the event announcement, it says: "Kurt Schwerdtfeger with students of the PH [Pädagogische Hochschule] Alfeld/Leine."²⁰ These were probably Schwerdtfeger's own students, since he was teaching at that same Pedagogical Academy. Schwerdtfeger was a very dedicated teacher. In the 1950s he wrote a book about teaching art called *Bildende Kunst und Schule*, which has been reprinted on many occasions. This book also contains a chapter called *Das Reflektorische Farblightspiel*, which he was now using as an educational tool. The chapter starts with a brief historical overview, soon after which he switches to an elaborate explanation of the technology, including a schematic drawing to clarify the *dispositif* showing the light source, the templates and the projected image.

He also emphasises that the essence of *Das Reflektorische Farblightspiel* was the fact that it was a play and not a finished work of art. The assignment was to create new colour and music performances based on improvisation by handling the device. The educational purpose behind this was to teach students about abstract images in a playful way, so they would more easily accept their strangeness. As a result, the performances presented were all new creations, and not reconstructions from what had been performed in the 1920s, the way Hirschfeld-Mack did. Of course, this way of working with the device perfectly fits Schwerdtfeger's idea that it was the device that was the most important part of *Das Reflektorische Farblightspiel*, rather than the images created with it.

This also explains why Schwerdtfeger's students were mentioned as part of *Das reflektorische Farblightspiel*; not only did Schwerdtfeger display the technology he developed as he did in the 1920s, but also the way he turned it into an educational tool during the 1950s. This leads to the conclusion that the institutional context of the *Pädagogische Hochschule* discursively framed *Das Reflektorische Farblightspiel* and accordingly determined the way it was used and performed. All this turned what was once created as an attempt to develop a new medium and art form into an educative tool.

In relation to film?

Interestingly, Schwerdtfeger ends his part on *Das Reflektorische Farblightspiel* by stating that one should beware when comparing it to film. Even though the results might be close to film, it should not be forgotten that it is from a very different aesthetical domain, similar to Calder's mobiles. He writes that it cannot be transported

onto film without risk of forgery, which would be caused by three things. First, the colours would never be the same. Second, film would bring flicker into the images. Finally, it would not represent the combination of two- and three-dimensional elements that characterised *Das Reflektorische Farbenspiel* an explanation that again follows constructivist discourse.

However, in 1968, two years after his death, Schwerdtfeger's *Das reflektorische Farbenspiel* was registered and released on film, ironically with the title *Reflektorische Farblightspiele* in plural. As a consequence, *Das Reflektorische Farblightspiel* became what he so eagerly defended it not to be: film.

The registration of the performance was released in combination with a short documentary on the device and its history. This brief film is far more in the spirit of Schwerdtfeger: we see the Alfeld-students perform the play using the device made by Schwerdtfeger, emphasising that part of the *dispositif* that Schwerdtfeger seems to have cared about most. And, as a matter of fact, the way the technology is visualised in this documentary almost turns it into an artwork in itself.

In all, we have seen how one device was actually used to produce two different works of art. The difference, however, was mostly in the way it was presented, and the discourse built around it, and not necessarily in what actually appeared on the screen. This shows us the importance of taking into consideration the use and presentation of the *dispositif* within the analysis of this colour light (music) performance.

This brings us back to the current presentation of *Farbenlichtspiele* as a device to play with at the exposition *Human-Space-Machine*. Again the *Spiele* are presented as a play, not with the purpose of familiarising the audience with abstract images, but having visitors to the exposition experience the physical history of Bauhaus-Bühne performances. Here we see a completely different use of the reconstruction and use of a device, which actually approaches a Media Archaeological experiment, and as such might even illustrate that Experimental Media Archaeology, as introduced into the field of media archaeology by Annie van den Oever and Andreas Fickers, might already have found its way into this historical exhibition on the Bauhaus Bühne.²¹

Notes

¹ See <http://Barrow-in-Furness/atlas/werke/reflektorisches-lichtspiel>, last visit 24 December 2014.

² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & the Discourse on Language*, Pantheon Books, New York 1972.

³ See Thomas Elsaesser, *Archives and Archaeologies. The Place of Non-Fiction Film in Contemporary Media*, in Vinzenz Hediger, Patrick Vonderau, *Films That Work. Industrial Films and the Productivity of Media*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2009, pp. 19-34.

⁴ Jean-Louis Baudry, "Effets idéologique produits par l'appareil de base," in *Cinématique*, no. 7-8, 1970, pp. 1-8; Id., "Le Dispositif: approches métapsychologiques de l'impression de réalité," in *Communications*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1975, pp. 56-72; Id., *L'Effet Cinéma*, Albatros, Paris 1978.

⁵ The methodology of this brief investigation into the *Lichtspiel(e)* is strongly inspired by the course Media-Archaeology that is being taught at the University of Amsterdam. I was involved in this course in 2007 and 2008, together with Wanda Strauven and Michael Wedel.

⁶ Kurt Schwerdtfeger, "Reflektorisches Lichtspiel," in *Der Sturm*, March 1924; Id., *Bildende Kunst und Schule*, Hermann Schroedel Verlag KG, Hannover 1957.

⁷ Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, "Die reflektorischen Farbenspiele," in *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, 24 August 1924; Id., *Farben Licht-Spiele - Wesen - Ziele - Kritiken*, Bauhaus, Weimar 1925.

⁸ Kurt Schwerdtfeger, "Reflektorisches Lichtspiel," cit. – "Das reflektorische Lichtspiel ist eine Synthese von Bewegung, Licht, Farbe, Form. Technischer Wille dabei ist - ökonomisch, mechanische Bewegung durch die Hand des Menschen selbst als Faktor für selbsttätige, gesetzmäßig Optik mit Hilfe von elektrischen - handbewegten - Lichtquellen - so entsteht Verbindung von Bewegung und Licht." My translation.

⁹ Parallel to this, Schwerdtfeger's son Stefan still connects the difference between Schwerdtfeger and Hirschfeld-Mack to the different arts both men represented. Schwerdtfeger was a sculpture, interested in three-dimensional objects – the device producing the images, Hirschfeld-Mack was a graphic designer, more interested in the effect of the images and how they could be used for commercial purposes.

¹⁰ Schwerdtfeger is also remembered as constructivist in the documentary *Making Reflektorische Farblightspiele* from 1968.

¹¹ Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, *Farben Licht-Spiele - Wesen - Ziele - Kritiken*, cit., p. 2. "FARBEN-LICHTSPIELE: Ein Spiel bewegter gelber, roter, grüner und blauer Lichtfelder, in organisch bedingten Abstufungen aus der Dunkelheit entwickelt bis zur höchsten Leuchtkraft." My translation.

¹² *Der Tag*, 25 September 1924, quoted in Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, *Farben Licht-Spiele - Wesen - Ziele - Kritiken*, cit., p. 12. "Im Kleinen Konzerthausaal wurde sodann ein reflektorisches Farbenspiel des Weimarer Bauhauses (Komposition von H.-M.) vorgeführt, ein abstrakter Film, in dem geometrische Farbfiguren ein der Musik verwandtes Bewegungsspiel aufführen." My translation.

¹³ For an image of Hirschfeld-Mack performing, see Benoît Turquety, "Cinéma, couleur, mouvement. Kinémacolor et abstraction," in *EU-Topias*, no. 7, 2014. http://www.eu-topias.org/articulo.php?ref_page=32, last visit 24 December 2014.

¹⁴ Georg Anschütz, *Farbe-Ton-Forschungen: III. Band. Bericht über den II. Kongress für Farbe-Ton-Forschung (Hamburg, 1.-5. Oktober 1930)*, Psychologisch-Ästhetische Forschungsgesellschaft, Hamburg 1931, pp. 109-114. "Es ist kein Zufall, daß fast gleichzeitig, unabhängig voneinander, an den gleichen Aufgaben gearbeitet wurde. So sind es unter anderen in Deutschland für den Film Ruttmann und Eggeling, für Farblichtmusik László, in Paris sind es Fernand Léger, Man Ray. Ebenso gibt es in England und Amerika [...] Künstler, die, ohne etwas voneinander zu wissen, aus eigenen inneren Antrieben das farbige Licht in seinen außerordentlich vielgestaltigen Möglichkeiten für ihre Farbenkompositionen verwendet haben." My translation.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, *Farben Licht-Spiele - Wesen - Ziele - Kritiken*, cit., p. 6. "Die zeitliche Folge einer Bewegung ist leichter und genauer durch eine akustische als durch eine optische Gliederung verständlich." My translation.

¹⁷ See *Idem*, pp. 18-21.

¹⁸ Georg Anschütz, *Farbe-Ton-Forschungen: III. Band. Bericht über den II. Kongress für Farbe-Ton-Forschung (Hamburg, 1.-5. Oktober 1930)*, cit., p. 112. For more information on Kandinsky colour-form experiments at Bauhaus, see Thomas Jacobsen, "Kandinsky's Color-Form Correspondence and the Bauhaus Colors: An Empirical View," in *Leonardo*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2004, pp. 135-136; Id., "Kandinsky's Questionnaire Revisited: Fundamental Correspondence of Basic Colors and Forms?," in *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, vol. 95, no. 3, 2002, pp. 903-913.

¹⁹ Bauhaus-Archiv: Hirschfeld-Mack – Mappe 1: [sketches], Mappe 2: "Farben-Sonatine I," "Farben-Sonatine II," "S-Tanz," Mappe 3: [notes for performance].

²⁰ Claudia Heitmann, *Die Bauhaus-Rezeption in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von 1949 bis 1968. Etappen und Institutionen*, Hochschule der Künste, Berlin 2001, p. 255. "Kurt Schwerdtfeger mit Studierenden der PH Alfeld/Leine." My translation.

Colourful Projections: Bauhaus Farbenlichtspiele and their Various Reconstructions

²¹ Annie van den Oever, Andreas Fickers, *Experimental Media Archaeology: A Plea for New Directions*, in Annie van den Oever (ed.), *Techné/Technology. Researching Cinema and Media Technologies, Their Development, Use and Impact*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2013, pp. 272-278.

Tacita Dean: Uncertain Archives

For Tacita Dean, film is always about time: questions about the temporality of the medium intersect with the themes of disappearance that recur throughout her work. Dean's narratives are formed from found materials, such as photographs and texts which are in turn orientated around the tales of natural phenomena and the articulation of myths – the “uncertainties” – that attract the attention of an “archival artist.”² These narratives are haunted by “ghosts of repetition” and are always incomplete, so that archival presentation of her work remains a site for the construction of meaning, rather than the excavation of the past.³ For Hal Foster, Dean's films trace the work of “‘unchartered research’ for protagonist and archivist alike” as the “found yet constructed, factual yet fictive” method of collecting materials draws the remnants of past practices and events into new contexts, an effect which he refers to as “the other of reification.”⁴ Thus Dean's interest in the photographic is as the detritus of a social practice, the possibilities of its narrative forms as they intersect with other disciplines – from literature to the work of a collector – and for the specific qualities of analogue film and its representations.

The paradox of film, as a “permanent record of fleeting moments [...] and an unprecedented means of capturing time,” lies between the illusion of temporal continuity and “stopped-time,” that is, between the cinematic illusion of movement and the series of still images that belie it.⁵ In *The Green Ray* (2001, 16mm) Dean's fascination with analogue film stock is invested in the indexicality of a photographic image as an instance of the direct relation between light, photosensitive material, and the filmed space. Dean's focus on the photographic as the capturing of an instant is underscored by the subject of *The Green Ray* as it explores the possibility that the transient and ephemeral effect of an eclipse or the glimpse of colour at sunset may be registered in a material form. Each of these phenomena has been the focus of Dean's 16mm films *Banewl* (1999) and *The Green Ray* (2001). The elusive optical effect of green light which promises to glimmer through the fading sunlight at dusk, which Dean suggests a fragment of 16mm film has captured after weeks of study at Morombe in Madagascar, signals a temporality specific to film. From the indexicality of the photographic image and its pic-

torial content, to the series of still frames that belie the cinematic illusion of movement, analogue film as the material support then becomes the focus of Dean's work in a move that is contemporary with an interest in the concept of medium specificity.⁶

*when my film fragment was later processed in England, there, unmistakably, defying solid representation on a single frame of celluloid, but existent in the fleeting movement of film frames, was the green ray, having proved itself too elusive for the pixilation of the digital world.*⁷

Film stills, which have been theorized as the capturing of an instant, lie in tension with the fantasy of presence as the film is replayed.⁸ The social use of photography, which invests in the ideation of realism and objectivity, is called into question by the theme of disappearance in Dean's work as something ineluctably cinematic.⁹ It is in this sense that Dean's films play on uncertainty: from the particularities of the architecture and technologies encountered in the circulation and viewing of a single print to the duplication of images that marks the photographic as a medium of multiples. The film strip also retains the marks of its production, circulation and storage: from edge codes, which register the source and date of manufacture, to the scratches and detritus that form an index of the environmental effects of heat, humidity, light and the machines of manufacture and projection. For photographic film stock, the accumulation of damage is specific to each print as a trace of its life cycle. The fading of colour under the light of the project or lamp and decay, which occur over time, disturb the structural status of the analogue photographic image. Thus the "structural status" of the photographic image as a copy, splinters "the supposed unity of the original 'itself' into nothing but a series of quotations" countering the sense in which each fragment of film, each copy, differs as it bears the marks of deterioration which betray the physical effects of its use.¹⁰

In keeping with Thomas Elsaesser's statement in "The New Film History as Media Archaeology" that film is historical and offers an image or representation of history, this paper questions a teleological model of technologically determined film history that would otherwise position digital media as a response to the retrospectively perceived inadequacies of analogue film.¹¹ Thus analogue and digital media are not considered in terms of succession, but in terms of a transience that is integral to the endless shifting alterations and returns, the developments and retrospectives in the convergence/divergence of new media and restoration, so that uncertainty can be posed as an "object of contemplation" that is integral to the complex temporalities that can be traced across the intersections and differences – the connections and gaps – which occur between film materials and their representations. The "uncertainties" that Foster notes of an archival artist can be discerned in Dean's work: from the elusive optical effects of natural phenomena that form a focus of her films to the specificities of the materials that she heralds as close to obsolescence, and the anomalies and excesses that cannot be readily resolved by the textual system within which they occur. The photographic, like the history of film – as "detritus of a social practice" – is haunted by uncertainty and repetition.¹²

Colour fades and colour balances alter: the chromatic scale of film image is linked to its material base of photosensitive emulsion or the layering of dyes and chemical processes that alter its colouration. The use of colour in Tacita Dean's film works and installations varies from the paradox of a commission for "failed tints" in the production of *FILM* (2011, 35mm) to "revive spontaneity and risk" she associates with the photographic, to the optical effects and natural phenomena of light which occur in a landscape and against a horizon of uncertainties.¹³ In her analysis of *Disappearance at Sea* (1996, 16mm), Tamara Trodd refers to colour in terms of the delineation of space, demarcating the "found 'special effects'" of light refracted by the interior chambers of a lighthouse and changes in the weather and landscape outside.¹⁴ Dean's films trace a fascination with the possibilities and limits of analogue film and the phenomena of light and landscape. From *The Green Ray* (2001) to

Kodak (2006, 16mm), this intrigue is orientated around that which remains uncharted, insinuated but not defined, of an archive. The seeming familiarity of a photographic image or medium set in a new context or disquieted by an optical effect calls to the interplay of the prosaic and spectacle. In this sense, the attraction of colour persists in *The Green Ray* as the promise of a glimpse of this transient effect lures the spectator to repeated screenings.¹⁵ Dean suggests that the ephemeral green hue, as a fabled phenomenon,

*can be observed at the last moment of sunset – technically the moment after the sun's upper rim disappears into the sea – when a green iridescent flash fans out over the horizon above the sunken orb [...] by chance as the red upper rim vanished, a distinct, momentary, radium – green glow blinked and was gone.*¹⁶

The uncertainty of colour plays on the social and subjective aspects of the film and its viewing: between the familiarities of the scene, the natural colour image, and the instance of the subjective perception of the viewer. Elsaesser revisits the discourse of film history to suggest that “a universally comprehensible and yet deeply contradictory logic of the ‘visible’” in cinema has also created “new domains of the ‘invisible’.”¹⁷ The “invisible” denotes the films and practices, such as the work of the laboratories that have been overlooked. In *The Green Ray*, natural colour is “predetermined by photographic technology in accordance with a certain ‘colour philosophy’ before the film is exposed.”¹⁸ Each film stock sustains its own colour ideology, in the chromatic range, light, and shadow that it can readily replicate. In this context, the limits of the technical support are marked by inconsistencies in colour resolution or the obfuscation of fine details in areas that are affected by the under or over exposure of the film to light. In *The Green Ray* colour as spectacle is interlinked with the natural colour image and the ideology of realism as an effect of the cinematic apparatus. Dean suggests that perception of the greenish hue of this optical phenomenon, which was not registered or visible on a digital file or in a single still image, was dependent on a configuration of the analogue film print in performance – as the film was exhibited and played – and the spectator’s subjective response.

Tacita Dean’s attention to the specificity of photographic film persists in *Kodak* (2006), which was shot at a factory in Chalon-Sur-Saône as they ceased production of 16mm film, and then *Noir et Blanc* (2006, 16mm) as the four-and-a-half-minute piece which she shot on her five remaining rolls of Kodak film. Dean notes the glistening surface and translucency of the film stock as the machines were being tested, signalling an attention to materials and colour that Marx similarly reads of the screened image in its “deep reds, rich blacks and blue-violets and the blush pink of the polyester film strip.”¹⁹ *Kodak* foregrounds the question of the obsolescence of analogue film, and specifically its 16mm format, as a gauge associated with artists’ films and experimental works. As the cinematic archive is increasingly accessed and studied through digital media, the availability of digital simulacra displaced from the materials themselves transforms what is imagined and imaged as the past of film. The transience both of natural phenomena and the history of alterations in the production and circulation of film, intersect in the temporality of Dean’s work, where cultural memory encounters instances of subjective perception. For Dean “obsolescence is about time the way film is about time: historical time, allegorical time, analog time. I cannot be seduced by the seamlessness of digital time; like digital silence, it has a deadness.”²⁰ The obsolescence of film materials and particular methods of colouring film is a concern for archivists and the focus of Dean’s work “since digital technology continues to perturb their realm as well; similar to filmmaking, the present is also a transitional period for archival practice.”²¹ In 2011–2012 and in a direct address of diminished availability of 16mm film processing, Dean projected a looped piece entitled *FILM* (11mins, 35mm)²² onto a thirteen-metres-tall monolith in the Tate Modern’s Turbine Hall. The tale that subsists in *FILM* is drawn from Rene Daumal’s incomplete text, *Mount Analogue*, which was published posthumously in 1952.²³ Daumal’s novel details an expedition in the yacht called the *Impossible* in search of Mount Analogue, which remains

imperceptible from all but few perspectives due to refraction of light. The curiosity of Mount Analogue is that it appears only "at a certain point when the sun sits on the horizon at dawn or at dusk, at particular coordinates and at a certain time of year."²⁴ Uncertainty orientates the imagination of authenticity in the desire for evidence – the inscription of an index in photographic material by a transient effect of light. Filmmakers working in classic cinema have tended to conceal the material base (of cellulose nitrate or acetate and light sensitive emulsion) of film to facilitate the cinematic illusion. Dean's *FILM*, however, counters this practice to foreground analogue film through a series of processes including multiple exposures, glass-matt painting, the mirroring and masking of images, alongside colour dyes and tinting.

During the preparation of *FILM*, a change in administration at Deluxe led to the decision that although the Soho Film Laboratory would continue to process 16mm and 35mm film stock, it would stop printing the smaller gauge materials. The service provided by the lab had facilitated 16mm film works in museums and galleries. Its cessation disbanded a group of specialist personnel.²⁵ The expertise specific to the use of displaced technologies increasingly resides with independent filmmakers, collectors, and preservation specialists, whilst for Dean *FILM*, which was subsequently printed for screening on 35mm film stock, becomes a document about "the very fabric, material and manufacture of film itself."²⁶ Although the concept of obsolescence has tended to demarcate the demise of a technology or practice, as Elsaesser has noted, its proper use is for the description of materials and machines which are no longer the primary focus of economic production, although the documentation and instructions of use still exist.²⁷ For Elsaesser a contradiction emerges as such prosaic materials are refigured as a fetish. The texts surrounding *FILM* offer a framework through which to consider the duplication of a strip of film in a preservation project in which, for example, an initial copy or record can be made of the materials as they are found prior to a series of alterations being made toward the synthesis of variations in image quality and the production of a cohesive text. Such a process invests in the history of film and yet is concomitant with the effacement of the marks that register the history of production and circulation specific to each film element. This process encapsulates the paradox of a restoration, which by producing a copy invests in the concept of an original. The scarcity of the film materials, certain technologies, the skill of specialist laboratory workers and the possibility of projecting and viewing a print, marks the economic and cultural value of an analogue image as a site of potential loss.²⁸

In her work on the concept of medium specificity, Rosalind Krauss has written that the "passage from mass use to obsolescence" signals the photographic as theoretical object.²⁹ In response to increasing interest in mixed-media installation art from the 1960s to the 1990s, Krauss detailed a "post-medium condition" that differed from the Greenbergian concept of medium specificity.³⁰ Krauss's reading of the medium as "a set of conventions derived from (but not identical to) the material conditions of the given support,"³¹ indicated that specificity does not lie with particular materials or methods, but their intersection through the "essence of art itself."³² Krauss extends this reading to the interest of structuralist filmmakers in refiguring the relationship between the cinema spectator and the screen as an apparatus of fantasy: a move that is determined to disrupt their positioning from within an ideologically complicit form of representation. In this sense, as Peter Gidal explains, the works gathered by the London Filmmaker's Co-op were embedded in the anti-illusionist concerns of structuralists in "militating against transparency; its presentation [or] formation of processes of production."³³ Such work invoked the materiality of film to make its processes and technical limits visible, marking a refraction of the cinematic, and drawing the materials and medium which have tended to be effaced in its narrative forms, into a critical discourse. From the "single, almost uninterrupted zoom" of Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967) to the changes in light specific to the time and place of filming, from sunrise to sunset, that are registered through the colour temperature of the film stock of William Raban's *Colours of This Time* (1972, 16mm), each film offers a nexus of the viewer's memory and screened image that can be read as a socially invest-

ed space. The structuralists' concern with destabilising the position of the ideological positioning of the spectator emphasises the "film in performance" as an aggregate of the film's material base, the technologies of production and projection, and the interpretation and experience of viewing film.³⁴

The technical underpinnings of Dean's films resonate with methodologies of archival research and have elicited a fascination with the "uncertainty" of her films and the texts that surround them.³⁵ Peter Wollen, for one, turned to Dean's work to test the definition of the "artist's film" within the framework of the art world institution.³⁶ He saw the modernist fascination with reflexivity and process as a link between films made by artists for cinema and gallery exhibition and films usually discussed under the rubric of experimental, avant garde, or political forms outside of institutional structures. Wollen writes:

*Research seems to drive many of the films. Each of them seems like the outcome of an extremely personal and idiosyncratic research project [...] In this sense, Tacita Dean's cinema is a conceptualist cinema, a body of work which reflects an underlying body of thought.*³⁷

Similarly, the configuration of materials, images, and texts in *Disappearance at Sea* establishes a borderline between the fictional and factual, an uncertainty that parallels the configuration of materials drawn together in the archival research and restoration of colour film.³⁸

Dean's research process interweaves factual details of familiar events with materials found by happenstance, from Crowhurst's 1968 Sunday Times Golden Globe Single-Handed Round-the-World Yacht Race, to the detritus of a photograph found in the leaves of a book from which the fragmented tale of *Girl Stowaway* (1994, 16mm) unfolds. This practice introduces incidental and tenuous connections with historiographies that are already established to form a new configuration of materials specific to each work. Dean's film, *Teignmouth Electron* (1999), traces the remnants of Crowhurst's voyage, from the inaccurate reports of his geographical location that were returned to shore and a diary that became increasingly disordered at the mercy of a faulty chronometer as he invested and failed in the history and practice of "sailors whose only way of locating themselves [was] through zealous timekeeping."³⁹ Dean's fascination with temporality and the borderlines of fact and fiction that can be tracked through historical documentation echoed the form of her 1994 installation, *Girl Stowaway*. The book from which *Girl Stowaway* emerged "exists as a recorded passage of time"⁴⁰ of the ship, the paths by which its illicit passengers take voyage, the narrative that unfolds between beginning and end of the film and that of Dean's research, from diaries and fiction to song lyrics heard by chance, toward tales of other stowaways and wrecked ships. The "rigour and allusiveness" of Dean's work manipulates the "the gaps or lacks conducive to the production of historical significance."⁴¹ As such, the work of a collector, Mieke Bal explains, produces a cultural object, which "must signify through common codes and conventions of meaning-making that both producer and reader understand," thus, meaning is intersubjectively deciphered, making all narratives "more or less fictional; or conversely [...] fictionality a matter of degree."⁴² The configuration of materials, images and texts that are drawn together in *Disappearance at Sea* trace a borderline of the fictional and factual to elicit a sense of uncertainty that persists in each screening, in this context the instability of colour and meaning, traces the borderline of variations in materials, cultural production, and subjective perception, in a call to the past which remains open to different futures.

The relationship between analogue and digital media has more recently been theorised in terms of convergence/divergence as the cinematic archive is increasingly transferred and accessed via electronic means.⁴³ In *From Grain to Pixel*, Giovanna Fossati explores and develops the concept of convergence/divergence to suggest that the intersection of different media and techniques does not produce a final or fixed point in the material life of a film, but reminds us of the "dynamics of change."⁴⁴ In this sense, uncertainty makes visible – draws

into the midst of perception – the continual accumulation and proliferation of images, the multiples variations and simulacra that constitute an archive. The interweaving of analogue and digital media, both in restoration projects and the way we access and study the moving image is another aspect in the endlessly changing configuration of archival materials and processes. In this sense, the concept of convergence/divergence moves away from a teleological model of film history. As Elsaesser notes, “we seem to be in a ‘now’ for which there is no clear ‘before’ or ‘after.’ Thus the digital marks a threshold and a boundary, without thereby defining either.”⁴⁵ The effects of digital media, as they intersect with the study of the analogue image, open a space in which to reflect on the divisive and chronological history of genres and technologies:

*If the arrival of the digital pixel “created” the concept of the post-photographic image, the consequence was that it also changed the meaning of photographic realism. Such semantic shifts – a sort of constitutive inversion of cause and effect – are well known in media history: black-and-white was an “effect” of the introduction of colour.*⁴⁶

The disquieting effect of uncertainty in the materials and form of Dean’s *FILM* marks the shifting boundaries of spectacle and realism, analogue and digital. In this sense, *The Green Ray* can also be situated in a cultural imaginary for which the cinema effect of colour, spectacle and realism are integral. Dean’s work foregrounds moments of uncertainty, which, in turn, signal a desire to decipher a history of film that has interlinked materials and meanings in the imagining of the past cultures of others.

In his curatorship of *Archive Fever. Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* at the International Centre of Photography, Okwui Enwezor has spoken of an image that is infinitely duplicated: “whether a still picture or a moving image, derived from a negative or digital camera” the image “becomes in the realm of its mechanical reproduction or digital distribution or multiple projection, a truly archival image.”⁴⁷ In reading for the immediacy of replication and diffusion of analogue and digital images, Enwezor finds that it is not the indexicality of the photographic, but its intersection with the digital through the dispersal of simulacra in numerous prints, files, and copies, that forms an archive of both the source image and the technologies of its production and circulation. Tacita Dean, whose still-photographic piece *Floh* (2000) was included in the exhibition and its associated publications, is recognised by Enwezor for her work with the remnants of the photographic. For Enwezor the work of the archival artist draws its materials from a cultural use of the photographic that is embedded in the aesthetics and institution of news reports, police documentation, and the familiar practices of keeping home movies and family albums: the “critical instruments of archival modernity.”⁴⁸

Dean’s work utilises the photographic as the detritus of the social practices of documentation and archiving. The proliferation of such images is interwoven with the effects of digital media, from mobile phones and social networks and file – sharing sites such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. The archive is integral to and extended by the ways in which we access and study film and photographs. It is in this sense that Enwezor writes that:

*in this prosaic form, the photograph becomes the sovereign analogue of identity, memory and history, joining past and present, virtual and real, thus giving the photographic document the aura of an anthropological artifact and the authority of a social instrument.*⁴⁹

The increasingly diffuse modes of accessing film demand that the spectator make sense of the narratives that can be formed from endlessly shifting variations of a fragmented texts, a process which for Foster, suggests that the “digital reordering” of images acts as an interpretant.⁵⁰ Films such as *The Green Ray*, which intermittently appear as files on the internet and those images that form a record of *FILM* in the context of the Turbine Hall, gesture toward the scarcity of viewing the work as it is exhibited in a gallery space. As the digital *dispositif*

becomes less concerned with mimicking its antecedents, the concept of convergence/divergence facilitates the analysis of an increasingly diffuse archive which in turn sustains a fascination with copies whose originals have been lost. The uncharted territories and phenomena that instigate Dean's work play on uncertainty, manipulating different configurations of images, materials and texts toward the potential of new narratives as the dynamics of change continue to proliferate and produce a truly archival image.

Notes

¹ My thanks to the British Artists Film and Video Study Collection.

² Peter Wollen "Tacita Dean," in *Aferfall*, no. 1, 2000, p. 112; Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," in *October*, vol. 110, 2004, pp. 3-4, 11.

³ *Idem*, pp. 16, 22.

⁴ *Idem*, pp. 5, 13, 16.

⁵ Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge-London 2002.

⁶ Erika Balsom, *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2013, p. 65. In an analysis of the proliferation of screens through digital media and in gallery contexts form impact on cinema as institution and specificity of film, Balsom notes that whilst making *The Green Ray*, Dean had recently learned that "Eric Rohmer had faked the effect in *Summer (Rayon Vert*, 1986), his cinematographer having waited two months in the Canary Islands for every sunset before giving up and going home to the magic of post production." I would argue that such uncertainties orientate our perception of authenticity and evidence.

⁷ Tacita Dean, in Rina Caravajal (ed.), *Tacita Dean: Film Works*, Edizioni Charta, Milan 2007, p. 88.

⁸ Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, Reaktion Books, London 2006.

⁹ Peter Geimer, "Image as Trace: Speculations about an Undead Paradigm," in *Differences*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2007, pp. 7-28, p. 8.

¹⁰ Rosalind Krauss, "Reinventing the Medium," in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1999, pp. 289-305.

¹¹ Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archaeology," in *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 14, nos. 2-3, 2004, pp. 75-117; Erika Balsom, *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art*, cit., pp. 65-106, p. 69.

¹² Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Photography Between History and the Monument*, in Id. (ed), *Archive Fever. Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, International Center for Photography, New York 2008, p. 12.

¹³ Tacita Dean, *FILM*, Tate Publishing, London 2011, p. 29. Alison Roberts "The Last Filmmaker," in *Evening Standard*, 10 October 2011, pp. 22-23. The contradiction inherent in a commission for "failed tints," successful in its deficiencies, finds the term left undefined in Dean's text, but perhaps plays on the idea of variations in the concentration of dye, duration of submersion in the chemical bath, or the uneven application of color. The note in the volume accompanying the installation of *FILM* does draw attention to replication of analogue processes such as tinting and toning rather than digital simulation. Tacita Dean's installation *FILM* was housed in the Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, 11 October 2011-11 March 2012. Roberts notes an incident in the editing of an unfamiliar format of film stock, which left a flash of white light where each cut was joined. Concern at this anomaly, which is specific to analogue

film, offers an interesting counterpoint to Dean's statement of *FILM* as a document and resonates with Elsaesser's note of the selective processes a teleological approach to film history.

¹⁴ Tamara Trodd, "Lack of Fit: Tacita Dean, Modernism and the Sculptural Film," in *Art History*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2008, pp. 368-386, p. 369.

¹⁵ The perception of a green hue is likely to be a physiological response to the act of looking continuously at the red hues of the sun, which traces an almost imperceptible trajectory across the horizon, until it drifts out of view.

¹⁶ Peter Nichols, *The Green Ray*, in Tacita Dean, *FILM*, cit., p. 62; Marina Warner in conversation with Tacita Dean, in Jean Christoph Royoux, Marnier Warner, Germaine Greer (eds.), *Tacita Dean*, Phaidon Press, London-New York 2006, p. 20. Dean comments that a few weeks after filming *The Green Ray* she found herself on a flight back from Washington: as she looked over the sleeping passengers just "as the sun appeared, and it was the most devastating green ray. A good second of colour, even a second and a half of deep emerald flicker [...]. I had seen it, and not in the elusive way I had seen it in Madagascar, but as a full-blooded green ray. I really like the one in the film because it is elusive, and it becomes about perception and faith rather than about the phenomenon, which I think is important."

¹⁷ Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archaeology," cit., p. 76.

¹⁸ Paul Read, *On Colour Preservation*, in Daan Hertogs, Nico de Klerk (eds.), *Disorderly Order: Colours in Silent Film*, Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, Amsterdam 1996, p. 72.

¹⁹ Kristine Marx, "The Materiality of Impermanence," in *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2008, pp. 64-70. Dean's 2006 framed work, *Found Obsolescence*, which shows a strip of exposed film with sprocket holes along one edge, was also made at this time.

²⁰ Tacita Dean, "Artist's Questionnaire: 21 Responses," in *October*, no. 100, 2002, p. 26.

²¹ Caylin Smith, "'The Last Ray of the Dying Sun': Tacita Dean's Commitment to Analogue Media as Demonstrated through *FLOH* and *FILM*," in *NECSUS. European Journal of Media Studies*, no. 2, 2012, <http://www.necsus-ejms.org/the-last-ray-of-the-dying-sun-tacita-deans-commitment-to-analogue-media-as-demonstrated-through-floh-and-film>, last visit 15 September 2014.

²² Tacita Dean, *FILM*, cit., p. 7.

²³ René Daumal, *Mount Analogue (Le Mont Analogue)*, Gallimard, Paris 1952), The Overlook Press, New York 2010.

²⁴ Tacita Dean, *FILM*, cit., p. 27.

²⁵ *Idem*, pp. 15-48.

²⁶ Tacita Dean, in Rina Caravajal (ed.), *Tacita Dean: Film Works*, cit., p. 88.

²⁷ See the Thomas Elsaesser contribution to this volume.

²⁸ The production of nitrate film stock ceased in 1951; subsequently, the projection of existing prints has incurred a series regulative safety measures.

²⁹ Rosalind Krauss, "Reinventing the Medium," cit., p. 296.

³⁰ *Id.*, *A Voyage on the North Sea*, in *Id.*, *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, Thames & Hudson, London 2000, p. 10.

³¹ *Id.*, "Reinventing the Medium," cit., p. 296; *Id.*, "Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition," in *October* no. 116, 2006, pp. 55-62, p. 56. Krauss refers to Chris Marclay's use of the term "technical support" to avoid the association of "medium" with Greenberg. In questioning the concept of the "medium" and its (dis)connection with the technical support of a work, obsolescence itself becomes the focus of art practice, a reflexivity that Krauss finds productive.

³² Id., *A Voyage on the North Sea*, cit., p. 10.

³³ Peter Gidal, *Film as Film*, in Id., *Materialist Film*, Routledge, London-New York 1989, pp. 20-21.

³⁴ Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea*, cit., pp. 24-25.

³⁵ Id., "Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition," cit., p. 59; Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," cit., p. 11.

³⁶ Peter Wollen, "Tacita Dean," cit., pp. 105-113. Wollen tracks the history of the artist's film to initial screenings of work by Joseph Cornell in Julien Lévy's Manhattan gallery in 1932, alongside films by Dali, Lévy and Man Ray.

³⁷ *Idem*, p. 112.

³⁸ Paolo Cherchi Usai, *The Death of Cinema, History, Cultural Memory and the Digital Dark Age*, BFI, London 2001, p. 131; "Marina Warner in conversation with Tacita Dean," p. 30. In a discussion of her film, *Disappearance at Sea* (1996), Dean has commented that, as lighthouses project light into the air not on to the sea, "the last scene [...] is actually faked. I used a mirror and a light because I really wanted the light on the surface of the sea. I shouldn't tell things like that, should I?"

³⁹ Tacita Dean, *Tacita Dean*, in Witte de With, *Cahier #6*, 1997, p. 121. The *Teignmouth Electron* was found adrift and empty, Crowhurst's yacht having increasingly been considered as unfit for the demands of its voyage and his training unsure. Crowhurst, it seems, determined to meet the expectations of others, for as long as possible concealed his losses in meeting their measure and was lost at sea with the yacht left wrecked.

⁴⁰ *Idem*, pp. 105-135; Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," cit., p. 12. Dean's *Girl Stowaway* tells the tale of Jean Jeannie who hides aboard the Herzogian *Cecilie* in Australia and bound for England.

⁴¹ Peter Wollen, "Tacita Dean," cit., p. 112; Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, cit., p. 33.

⁴² Mieke Bal, *Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting*, in Roger Cardinal, John Eisner (eds.), *The Cultures of Collecting*, Reaktion Books, London 1997, pp. 97-115, p. 98.

⁴³ Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel, the Archival Life of Film*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2009, pp. 134-138.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archaeology," cit., p. 98.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*. Joshua Yumibe, *Moving Color: Early Film, Mass Culture, Modernism*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick-London 2012, p. 6. Yumibe cites Elsaesser as he suggests that the majority of early film was coloured and yet retrospectively imagined as black-and-white as a format more familiar to synchronised film (circa 1927).

⁴⁷ Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever*, cit., p. 12.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ *Idem*, p. 13.

⁵⁰ Hal Foster, "Archives of Modern Art," in *October*, no. 99, 2002, pp. 81-95.

The first of these is the question of the nature of the state. The second is the question of the nature of the economy. The third is the question of the nature of the society. The fourth is the question of the nature of the culture. The fifth is the question of the nature of the politics. The sixth is the question of the nature of the religion. The seventh is the question of the nature of the art. The eighth is the question of the nature of the science. The ninth is the question of the nature of the philosophy. The tenth is the question of the nature of the law. The eleventh is the question of the nature of the medicine. The twelfth is the question of the nature of the agriculture. The thirteenth is the question of the nature of the industry. The fourteenth is the question of the nature of the commerce. The fifteenth is the question of the nature of the education. The sixteenth is the question of the nature of the literature. The seventeenth is the question of the nature of the music. The eighteenth is the question of the nature of the painting. The nineteenth is the question of the nature of the sculpture. The twentieth is the question of the nature of the architecture. The twenty-first is the question of the nature of the engineering. The twenty-second is the question of the nature of the technology. The twenty-third is the question of the nature of the transportation. The twenty-fourth is the question of the nature of the communication. The twenty-fifth is the question of the nature of the information. The twenty-sixth is the question of the nature of the energy. The twenty-seventh is the question of the nature of the environment. The twenty-eighth is the question of the nature of the health. The twenty-ninth is the question of the nature of the safety. The thirtieth is the question of the nature of the security. The thirty-first is the question of the nature of the defense. The thirty-second is the question of the nature of the justice. The thirty-third is the question of the nature of the equity. The thirty-fourth is the question of the nature of the freedom. The thirty-fifth is the question of the nature of the equality. The thirty-sixth is the question of the nature of the fraternity. The thirty-seventh is the question of the nature of the solidarity. The thirty-eighth is the question of the nature of the cooperation. The thirty-ninth is the question of the nature of the participation. The fortieth is the question of the nature of the responsibility. The forty-first is the question of the nature of the accountability. The forty-second is the question of the nature of the transparency. The forty-third is the question of the nature of the integrity. The forty-fourth is the question of the nature of the honesty. The forty-fifth is the question of the nature of the truthfulness. The forty-sixth is the question of the nature of the sincerity. The forty-seventh is the question of the nature of the genuineness. The forty-eighth is the question of the nature of the authenticity. The forty-ninth is the question of the nature of the originality. The fiftieth is the question of the nature of the creativity. The fifty-first is the question of the nature of the innovation. The fifty-second is the question of the nature of the invention. The fifty-third is the question of the nature of the discovery. The fifty-fourth is the question of the nature of the exploration. The fifty-fifth is the question of the nature of the investigation. The fifty-sixth is the question of the nature of the research. The fifty-seventh is the question of the nature of the study. The fifty-eighth is the question of the nature of the analysis. The fifty-ninth is the question of the nature of the synthesis. The sixtieth is the question of the nature of the evaluation. The sixty-first is the question of the nature of the assessment. The sixty-second is the question of the nature of the measurement. The sixty-third is the question of the nature of the quantification. The sixty-fourth is the question of the nature of the calculation. The sixty-fifth is the question of the nature of the computation. The sixty-sixth is the question of the nature of the processing. The sixty-seventh is the question of the nature of the manipulation. The sixty-eighth is the question of the nature of the transformation. The sixty-ninth is the question of the nature of the conversion. The seventieth is the question of the nature of the translation. The seventy-first is the question of the nature of the interpretation. The seventy-second is the question of the nature of the explanation. The seventy-third is the question of the nature of the justification. The seventy-fourth is the question of the nature of the defense. The seventy-fifth is the question of the nature of the argument. The seventy-sixth is the question of the nature of the reasoning. The seventy-seventh is the question of the nature of the logic. The seventy-eighth is the question of the nature of the philosophy. The seventy-ninth is the question of the nature of the metaphysics. The eightieth is the question of the nature of the epistemology. The eighty-first is the question of the nature of the ontology. The eighty-second is the question of the nature of the cosmology. The eighty-third is the question of the nature of the theology. The eighty-fourth is the question of the nature of the anthropology. The eighty-fifth is the question of the nature of the sociology. The eighty-sixth is the question of the nature of the psychology. The eighty-seventh is the question of the nature of the biology. The eighty-eighth is the question of the nature of the chemistry. The eighty-ninth is the question of the nature of the physics. The ninetieth is the question of the nature of the mathematics. The ninety-first is the question of the nature of the astronomy. The ninety-second is the question of the nature of the geology. The ninety-third is the question of the nature of the meteorology. The ninety-fourth is the question of the nature of the climatology. The ninety-fifth is the question of the nature of the oceanography. The ninety-sixth is the question of the nature of the environmental science. The ninety-seventh is the question of the nature of the earth science. The ninety-eighth is the question of the nature of the planetary science. The ninety-ninth is the question of the nature of the space science. The hundredth is the question of the nature of the future.

À propos du webdocumentaire, entre interfaces et découvertes¹

Je vais présenter un tour d'horizon sur un objet liminaire – de nos jours encore – du monde audiovisuel, le webdocumentaire, qui m'apparaît riche, tout en décrivant quelques aspects constitutifs.

Je proposerai une histoire problématisée, en empruntant une approche d'archéologie intermédiaire, en inscrivant le webdoc dans un ensemble de créations du monde numérique, et de postures de créateurs qui expérimentaient des voies pour la transmission du savoir par le *partage du sensible*. À cela se rattachera une proposition de lecture du phénomène webdocumentaire comme héritier de formes anciennes de « partage des connaissances ».

Il s'agira en somme, au long de ce texte, de définir et présenter un objet.

Contours

Émergeant lorsqu'Internet s'affirme comme plateforme de diffusion de contenus audiovisuels, se développant avec la généralisation des connexions à large bande, le webdocumentaire échappe encore aux définitions.² Déjà la dénomination de l'objet est incertaine et changeante – ce qui est typique des périodes d'émergence d'un média ou d'une pratique médiatique.

Nous pouvons retrouver, tour à tour au sein des objets mêmes ou dans les discours qui les entourent : *Webdocumentary*/webdocumentaire ; *Interactive Online Documentary* ; *Interactive Documentary*/documentaire interactif ; *Database Documentary* ; documentaire multimédia ; jeu documentaire ; et, plus en général, la catégorie *Digital Storytelling*, pour en identifier le mode de récit ou bien encore la catégorie transmédia, pour identifier ces types de production « en cascade », comme jadis on parlait de *produits dérivés*. Cette indétermination de la dénomination n'influence pas la popularité de ces productions.

Les webdocumentaires sont très présents dans l'actualité des médias.³ Une section webdoc est souvent présen-

te dans les festivals de cinéma documentaire (qui en coproduisent aussi)⁴ depuis le tournant des années 2010. Les structures de financement du documentaire requièrent désormais souvent un volet interactif sur le web qui, donc, parfois, est à l'origine de webdocs. Les webdocs commencent à être bien présents dans les réflexions, et dans les pratiques, à l'université.⁵ Comme minimum dénominateur, on pourra partir de ceci : sont aujourd'hui nommés webdocumentaires des sites Internet au contenu original (et plus récemment aussi des applications) composés d'un montage d'éléments multimédia (images fixes et en mouvement – graphiques et photographiques –, texte, son) liés par une mise en forme et une structure. La mise en forme et la structure devraient porter une signature d'auteur, ou une intention d'auteur, qui marque la création. Chaque webdoc peut appartenir plus au moins clairement à des séries culturelles diverses.⁶ Les formes du webdoc peuvent être variées, et surtout sont en mutation continuelle. À titre d'exemple, nommons quelques webdocs, en tension avec une série culturelle – toujours des créations audiovisuelles – de laquelle, selon nous, il participe à chaque fois. Certains s'apparentent plus clairement à une œuvre cinématographique : le projet *Épopée* (2010) ou *Hyperlocal* (2013) ; au film-essai : *Territoires* (2011) ; aux projets militants : *Le Printemps d'après* (2013) ; au reportage télévisuel : *Ici chez soi, le coût de l'itinérance* (2012) ; ou encore au photojournalisme : *Caméra embarquée sur la ligne de front d'Alep* (2012).

Il est évident que le terme webdocumentaire implique deux éléments, *web* et *documentaire*.⁷ Ceux-ci renvoient minimalement à des traits constitutifs que l'on peut rapidement passer en revue : du côté du web, multimédia, interactif, délinéarisé et lacunaire, ainsi qu'immersif ; et du côté du documentaire : volonté de conservation et regard d'auteur.⁸ Interactivité : l'internaute a le défi de s'orienter dans des parcours sémi-dirigés. Même si les logiciels (par exemple : Klynt, Djéhouti, Korsakow) qui permettent de créer ces parcours reposent sur des principes semblables, le rendu visuel de chaque œuvre est expérimental et artisanal. Il faut donc toujours réapprendre à naviguer dans ces récits-actables.⁹ Faire l'expérience d'un webdoc comporte aussi de se réadapter toujours à l'interface. En effet, un enjeu sensible dans la relation entre le spectateur et l'œuvre se situe exactement au niveau de l'interface.¹⁰ Cette notion désigne, il est évident, ce qui, au milieu de deux ensembles, permet et règle les actions entre ces derniers. De manière générale, lorsqu'un webdoc se présente avec une interface complexe, il requiert à l'internaute un effort considérable pour explorer son contenu. Mais d'autre part, lorsqu'on veut être positif vis à vis des potentialités de ces créations audiovisuelles, on peut aussi dire que cela s'inscrit le plus souvent dans ce que nous comprenons comme une volonté de l'auteur. *Soul Patron* (Frederik Rieckher, 2010), exemple artisanal par excellence, nous confronte avec le périple d'un voyageur au Japon. Celui-ci s'affole à décoder l'*empire des signes* qui l'entourent. Il semble avoir découpé son expérience du voyage en fragments qui, imprévisibles, s'offraient à sa découverte tout autant qu'à la nôtre lors de la navigation du webdoc. L'auteur est aussi bien le créateur de l'interface, des animations, des photos et des courts clip-vidéos, que notre guide à la découverte d'une figure particulière de la culture japonaise (Mizuko Jizo, culte aux esprits des enfants jamais nés). Confronté à la difficulté du parcours de lecture, le spectateur respecte un rythme intentionnellement lent et contemplatif. Les options complexes de l'interface rendent les choix opaques et, au final, mettent l'internaute dans une condition de tâtonnement. Ne s'agit-il pas d'une bonne posture pour contrer la tendance au cliquage forcené, digne héritier du zapping ?

Une tendance opposée serait celle de ces webdocs dont l'interface est presque transparente : une touche pour faire jouer une vidéo, et pas beaucoup plus. Dans *Alma* (Miquel Dewever-Plana et Isabelle Fougère, 2012 - ARTE), une longue entrevue d'une jeune femme rescapée des cartels de la drogue guatémaltèques est le cœur de l'œuvre. L'auteur du webdocumentaire a réussi à débloquent une parole, ce qu'il nous demande en retour, c'est une écoute. Il nous laisse uniquement la possibilité de détourner notre regard des yeux d'Alma qui nous fixe en parlant. En effleurant l'image avec la souris, sans que l'internaute dérange la parole d'Alma, quelques images fixes ou animées complémentaires ponctuent le récit.

Par ces deux cas, je veux souligner que les enjeux liés à l'interactivité sont incarnés par la notion d'interface. Opaque ou transparente, cette dernière contribue à mobiliser des comportements chez l'internaute qui vont déterminer sa posture, et donc le régime esthétique de l'œuvre et de sa réception. L'interactivité est donc aussi le lieu, propre au webdocumentaire, par lequel l'auteur peut partager son rapport au monde, et va permettre au spectateur de s'immerger dans le monde qu'il a construit.

L'on retiendra de ces courts exemples, que dans cette zone de l'univers numérique, par le terme immersion, on ne renvoie pas à l'immersion sensorielle des dispositifs spectaculaires tels que le D-Box ou l'AVX (deux systèmes vendus comme des intensificateurs de l'expérience cinéma), mais bien à une version individualisée de l'interactivité. Par ailleurs, l'on soulignera que le développement des applications vise à intensifier cette dimension de l'immersion : meilleure définition des images, brillance des écrans, son en écoute personnel, des images et des sons qui nous suivent fidèlement, où que nous soyons, sur nos « écrans 2 ».

Le terme multimédia permet de mettre en évidence la présence d'éléments développés de manière autonome : des images en mouvement et des images fixes, des animations, du son sous toutes ses formes (musique, commentaires *voice-over*, sons en prise directe, bruits et bruitages) et du texte (titres, sous-titres, textes d'explication, textes d'accompagnement, légendes, textes d'hyperlien, schémas). Quant aux images en mouvement, qui sont le lien le plus apparent avec le cinéma documentaire, les webdocs présentent dans un même objet, différents régimes esthétiques : tantôt du côté du travail sur la présentation photographique, tantôt du côté de la caméra embarquée ou tantôt du côté de la caméra omnisciente, presque de surveillance. Cette tendance à la multiplication des styles de prise de vue dans un même objet, et donc à la discontinuité comme caractéristique formelle, a toujours existé dans un certain type de film essai (la tradition du cinéma à la *Chris Marker*...¹¹).

En conséquence de l'assemblage de matériaux hétérogènes et de cette interactivité, le parcours de l'internaute est lacunaire et procède par fragments. Même dans les œuvres qui affichent une *timeline* avec défilement simple, des embranchements ouvrent des capsules multiples, que l'on peut décider de parcourir ou non. Ainsi fonctionne, par exemple la production ONF : *Terre de Froid* (Diane Whelan, 2011). À la fin de la navigation, l'internaute aura probablement laissé derrière lui beaucoup plus de lacunes qu'expérimenté toutes les voies possibles. Si la structure délinéarisée a toujours existé dans la tradition cinématographique de l'essai, ainsi qu'aux premiers temps de tous ces mouvements de l'histoire du cinéma commençant par « nouveau, nouvelle, néo, etc. », le webdoc comporte une conception encore plus radicale de ces tendances (discontinuité, lacunaire, délinéarisé), dans la mesure où des parties d'œuvre, aussi fragmentaires soient-elles, peuvent ne jamais entrer en relation avec le spectateur. Ni qualité, ni défaut, force est de constater que cette caractéristique est propre à l'institution qui encadre ces œuvres – c'est-à-dire Internet – et demande encore à être problématisée. Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire de s'intéresser à un sujet issu de la réalité, travailler longtemps à son étude, investir du temps dans son découpage et dans sa scénarisation pour le web, tout en étant bien conscient que même le spectateur idéal n'en fera pas le tour ? Suite à une première veille thématique que nous menons depuis 2012, il nous semble que la stratégie communicationnelle à l'œuvre dans ces objets est celle d'un auteur qui exprime la difficulté rencontrée, et le labeur déployé, pour s'emparer d'un sujet. En parcourant un webdoc, le spectateur suit les traces de ce tâtonnement vis-à-vis du réel, ce tâtonnement que les auteurs ont bien dû avoir en assemblant ce qu'ils avaient capturé dans leurs filets.

Un webdocumentaire est en somme en mesure de montrer toutes ensemble aux spectateurs les diverses avenues que les auteurs ont décidé de montrer, virtuellement en parallèle, sans les ordonner dans un montage linéaire et fixe. Le choix du spectateur est proportionnel à l'absence de choix de la part des auteurs. Ceux-ci ne sont pas contraints de résoudre le dilemme de « quoi montrer » et montrent ainsi, tout à la fois et à la carte, les aspects qui avaient concentré leur attention durant le voyage. Cela est naturellement issu du *database form* qui régit les interactions à l'ère d'Internet. Du côté de celui qui met en forme l'objet, il y a l'opportunité rare

de laisser sa création à l'état fragmentaire, délinéarisé, lacunaire. Du côté de celui qui le reçoit, il y a la responsabilité de passer outre ce morcellement pour reconnaître que le réel ne se donne jamais en entier. Les pistes offertes sont autant de portes d'entrée vers un sujet et ne sont jamais le traitement exhaustif de celui-ci.

Détours

Quelques considérations historiographiques pourraient trouver leur place, en ce moment de tour d'horizon d'un nouvel objet médiatique : je suggère de voir un enchaînement entre le webdocumentaire et une tradition des années 2000, davantage restée dans la dimension de prototype, celle de l'œuvre en cd-rom interactif.¹²

Nous pourrions minimalement rappeler trois différentes expressions de cette mouvance : *Immemory* (Chris Marker, 1997) ; *Anarchives* (sur Antoni Muntadas, Michael Snow, Thierry Kuntzel, Jean Otth, Fujiko Nakaya, 1999-2012) ; *Our Secret Century: Archival Films from the Darker Side of the American Dream* (Rick Prelinger, 1996-1998). Nous rassemblons ces trois références malgré leurs visées distinctes.

Chris Marker réalise, en tant que bricoleur, un dvd-rom qui lui offre la possibilité d'organiser une trame de réminiscences et de nouveaux parcours. Il réunit plusieurs types d'objet : une partie de ses archives photographiques, des créations infographiques artisanales, des textes et des créations sonores minimalistes. En parcourant ce dvd-rom on était confronté à des trajectoires typiquement markériennes, mêlant autobiographie imaginaire, expériences de voyage, réflexions sur la guerre et questionnements sur l'acte de création. Cela ponctuait ironiquement les choix proposés par l'interactivité de l'objet.

La série *Anarchives* est un projet qui invente une forme de musée interactif. Chaque volume de cette série est un dvd-rom réalisé par l'auteur (par exemple : Antoni Muntadas, Michael Snow, Thierry Kuntzel). Il devient le conservateur en chef de la présentation de ses propres archives ainsi que des éléments qu'il y rattache pour articuler la visite.

Our Secret Century: Archival Films from the Darker Side of the American Dream est une collection de 12 cd-rom. Les matériaux qui constituent le cœur du projet sont des films des archives Prelinger – films industriels, commerciaux et autres *useful movies*.¹³ Rick Prelinger, réalisateur du projet, est le bonimenteur qui apparaît dans des clips vidéo intercalés aux images d'archives. Il monte à partir des traces de la civilisation américaines, contenues dans les films, des discours multiples sur l'Amérique.

Une création d'auteur (*Immemory*), un projet muséal (*Anarchives*), une anthologie cinématographique (*Our Secret Century*), ces trois expérimentations liées à la *database logic* – notion évoquée plus haut, et jadis analysée par Lev Manovich¹⁴ en même temps que ces objets voyaient le jour –, offraient à l'histoire des médias une nouvelle voie pour une transmission des objets, l'articulation de discours sur les contextes qui les entouraient et l'invention d'une manière d'amener le spectateur à découvrir tout cela. Ces supports numériques, cd-rom et dvd-rom, en plus de transmettre des fragments audiovisuels accompagnés d'un discours, contenaient aussi une manière expérimentale de les exposer, inventant à chaque fois la structure qui les articulait et l'interface pour y accéder. Précieux dans une optique de partage créatif et novateur des connaissances, ces objets ont connus une fortune éphémère.

Si le volume d'*Anarchives*, *Digital Snow*, a bénéficié d'une migration sur le web – il est toujours accessible en ligne grâce au travail de la Fondation Daniel Langlois pour l'art la science et la technologie – les autres objets sont difficiles à consulter aujourd'hui notamment à cause des changements des systèmes d'exploitation informatiques. C'est peut-être ici une des raisons de leur mode d'existence seulement de prototype.¹⁵

Nous considérons que le webdocumentaire, qui a fleuri une dizaine d'années plus tard, gagne à être mis en série avec ces constructions archivistiques et d'auteur.¹⁶ Tous deux tendent au même type de partage de connais-

ce qui implique un spectateur actif, en mesure de suivre des parcours complexes et de combler les lacunes qu'une structure délinéarisée contient toujours. En évoquant une certaine posture pédagogique, on pourrait résumer ainsi – en reprenant des formules de Jacques Rancière : des *maîtres ignorants*, des *images pensives* et des *spectateurs émancipés*...

Ayant suivi cette même ligne d'interprétation du phénomène webdoc, en les rattachant à ces autres objets audiovisuels liés à la mise en valeur des archives, nous voudrions maintenant souligner comment l'un des thèmes qui est souvent exploité dans les webdocs est justement le traitement des archives. Des archives personnelles, des archives non institutionnelles ou même fantasmées, des archives menacées d'oubli, voilà des pistes dont partent beaucoup de webdoc. L'on acceptera à titre de d'exemple ces quelques titres, en sachant que le « genre » s'étend plus que ça : *Lost and Found* (Claire O'Neill, 2012 - National Public Radio, USA) ; *Pékin sans transition* (Jonathan De Victoria, Thomas Sauvin, Jérémie Descamps et Emiland Guillerme, 2012 - France Culture, CNC, Maison de la Chine) ; *Please call, very sentimental* (Alicia Smith, 2011 - ONF).

Dans tous ces cas : un geste de collectionneur au début, une trouvaille de chiffonnier (des collections d'images orphelines, possiblement d'une époque médiatiquement révolue – polaroid, diapositive, kodachrome, etc.), et l'invention d'une forme, d'une interface pour mêler la présentation de ces archives trouvées avec le récit que l'auteur du webdoc veut imposer à ces matériaux qui ne sont plus désormais bruts mais bel et bien traités. Le spectateur qui parcourt le webdocumentaire découvre des éléments d'une archive aussi bien qu'il apprend à explorer les pistes narratives qui maintenant les ordonnent.

Retours

En conclusion de ce parcours qui se voulait une présentation d'un phénomène en émergence, je souhaiterais ouvrir vers un rapprochement entre certains aspects constitutifs du webdoc et une forme de partage des connaissances qui l'a précédé. Une mise en série que nous tissons autour de cette tension entre spectaculaire et didactique, avec une collecte d'informations qui passe beaucoup par l'image et qui est toujours le résultat d'une recherche d'un auteur pour transmettre son expérience du lointain.

À la base du webdoc, il reste cette invention toujours renouvelée à la recherche d'une forme et d'une structure appropriée. Les créateurs des webdocs qui ont attiré notre attention ont eu à se déterritorialiser pour aller à la rencontre de leur sujet, comme tout bon documentariste. En expérimentant avec l'interface, les webdocumentaristes nous semblent rejouer la posture des pionniers de la vulgarisation scientifique *fin-de-siècle*. Je propose de lire dans le type de communication que nos objets engagent, la prolongation d'une tradition pédagogique ancienne : une forme de pédagogie visuelle et spectaculaire, les conférences illustrées et les revues de vulgarisation du tournant du XX^e siècle. Il serait ainsi productif, à mon avis, d'étudier le webdocumentaire au cœur d'une série culturelle qui plonge ses racines dans des contextes de diffusion du savoir, entre didactisme et sensationnalisme, au XIX^e siècle. Les conférences illustrées publiques qui avaient lieu au sein de grandes institutions qui mêlaient partage de nouvelles connaissances et amusement moderne, tel que le Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle (MHN) à Paris. C'était là une nouvelle forme de communications publiques qui attiraient les foules. Elles semblaient résulter d'une véritable volonté de diffusion.¹⁷

Elles mettaient en scène un imaginaire appliqué à apprivoiser l'inconnu, avec bien souvent une dose de fantasque et du récit d'aventures. Les retours des voyages sont en cela symptomatiques...

Considérant le webdocumentaire lié à cette tradition de la pédagogie spectaculaire et des récits aventureux, nous pouvons d'une part éviter le piège de voir dans le webdoc seulement la transformation inéluctable du cinéma en numérique, et d'autre part, nous pouvons à l'aide de pratiques plus anciennes mieux cerner les traits

d'une nouvelle forme. Se démarquent, le rôle central et autobiographique de l'auteur, l'écriture au « je » qui s'y rattache, le tout accompagné d'une mission éducatrice sur un sujet choisi. La mise en jeu des auteurs des web-docs dans leur quête s'exprime aussi, quant à eux, par l'état fragmentaire du texte qu'ils laissent au spectateur, ce dont nous avons traité précédemment.

Dans la tradition des conférences illustrées, les explorateurs sont aux prises avec une vraie passion pour la traduction graphique de leur observation (gravure, dessin et photo des documentations de phénomènes à étudier scientifiquement, de classifications d'animaux par exemple). C'est par des projections, souvent accompagnées par leurs textes écrits, lus et interprétés, véritables performances multimédias, qu'ils mettent en spectacle leurs découvertes. Complémentaires à ces performances – dont on peut retracer l'histoire en étudiant les revues illustrées de vulgarisation scientifique –, des textes reprenaient leur contenu, s'adressant à un public d'abonnés qui forme une communauté scientifique élargie.

Prenons un cas patent de 1902 : le géologue Alfred Lacroix, titulaire de la chaire de minéralogie depuis 1893 au Muséum, est dépêché en Martinique juste après l'éruption de la montagne Pelée qui a détruit la ville de Saint-Pierre le 8 mai 1902. Il réalise sur place une étude périlleuse du volcan. Il photographie et prend des nombreuses mesures. Sa correspondance, depuis la mission sur les flancs du volcan, régulièrement lue devant l'Académie des sciences et publiée dans *La Nature*,¹⁸ transmet ses mesures mais aussi tout un lot d'anecdotes et de bribes d'aventures qui situent les images dans une réelle expérience humaine. Sur les pages des revues, tout cela prend une forme multimédia (nous assumons l'anachronisme...) incarnant une préoccupation à trouver une forme esthétique nouvelle pour transmettre un type d'expérience qui était émergeant à l'époque.

Ces conférences, et leur retranscription illustrée, sont des formes de spectacularisation du savoir.

Se loge là un choix communicationnel bien conscient, visant un partage de connaissances.

À chaque fois, nos webdocumentaires, à la manière de ces formes plus anciennes, trouvent la forme et la structure adéquate pour rapporter les pièces détachées de l'expérience, toujours dépaysante, de la découverte.

Notes

¹ La recherche qui soutient cet article, et des parties de rédaction du même, ont été conçues avec Martin Bonnard, doctorant en Communication (programme conjoint UQAM, Concordia University, Université de Montréal) pour la participation à la recherche sur le webdocumentaire dont ce texte constitue un court aperçu. Cf., pour une version élargie et complémentaire, de ce texte : Viva Paci, Martin Bonnard, « Le Webdocumentaire à la croisée d'un réseau... », dans *Cahiers du CIRCAV* (*Cahiers interdisciplinaires de la recherche en communication audiovisuelle*), *Histoire(s) de l'Internet*, premier trimestre 2015, pp. 53-72.

² Quelques publications récentes tentent la présentation générale de ce genre médiatique. Mentionnons : Nicolas Bol, Cédric Mal, *Le Webdoc existe-t-il ?*, Le blog documentaire, Paris 2014, p. 608. Marcius Freire, Manuela Penafria (sous la direction de), « Webdocumentaire », dans *Doc On-Line. Revue électronique de cinéma documentaire*, n° 14, 2013, en ligne : <http://www.doc.ubi.pt/14/doc14.pdf>. Judith Aston, Jonathan Dovey, Sandra Gaudenzi (sous la direction de), « i-Docs special edition », dans *Studies in Documentary Film*, vol. 6, n° 2, 2012. Matthieu Lietaert, *Web-documentaires : guide de survie et conseils pratiques*, Not So Crazy !, Bruxelles 2011, p. 165.

³ L'actualité du webdoc est suivie régulièrement (plus de manière critique qu'analytique). Par exemple, en français, on peut en suivre l'actualité notamment dans *Webdocu.fr* (<http://webdocu.fr/web>).

documentaire/, Louis Villers, Alexis Sarini (sous la direction de), sans date) ; et dans *Le Blog documentaire* (<http://cinemadocumentaire.wordpress.com/>, Cédric Mal, dir., depuis 2011).

⁴ Par exemple : Cinéma du réel, Visions du réel, IDFA - International Documentary Festival of Amsterdam (en particulier la cellule DocLab), Ambulante, Tribeca Film Festival (en particulier la section Storyscapes), SXSW - South by Southwest, HotDocs, RIDM - Rencontres internationales du documentaire de Montréal.

⁵ Par exemple à Paris 3, Laurent Véray et Guillaume Soulez, avec leur programme de recherche sur les webdocumentaires et les plateformes webdocumentaires historiques. D'ailleurs, des webdocumentaires sont aussi réalisés dans les universités, de manière artisanale, dans le but de trouver de versions alternatives pour la transmission des connaissances. Cf. par exemple les webdocs que nous avons réalisés avec mon équipe de recherche sur webdoc : <http://www.webdoc.chrismarker.ca> (un projet sur le cinéma de Chris Marker comme outil pédagogique pour l'enseignement du cinéma documentaire) et <http://highline.webdocumentary.ca> (une phase du projet sur les visions cinématographiques de New York) ; ou encore le projet en cours de réalisation d'étudiants en Histoire de Paris I : « L'Histoire par la vidéo ». Du côté du MIT, une des retombées de la recherche dirigée par William Uricchio, au sein du *MIT Open Documentary Lab*, est la DocuBase : <http://docubase.mit.edu/>.

⁶ Bien que chaque titre possède son URL propre, les webdocs sont souvent liés à des institutions (et à leur site web) qui les présentent, en y apposant leur logo, et en investissant dans la production (comme le ferait un diffuseur TV). Pensons à : ARTE, France Télévisions, *Le Monde diplomatique*, LeMonde.fr, *Libération*, *Courrier international*, Rue89, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, Radio Canada/CBC, ONF/NFB. Ces institutions en pré-déterminent et en influencent les styles...

⁷ Notons que David Dufresne, un créateur de webdocumentaire qui se démarque par ses nombreuses invitations aux festivals et forums sur les nouvelles écritures web, parle d'« un documentaire avec le web ». Il souligne ainsi la possibilité de conserver l'héritage du documentaire, tout en tenant compte des propriétés du numérique. Cette notion est par ailleurs développée par Cédric Mal, « Vous avez dit (web)documentaire ? », dans *Images documentaires*, n° 75-76, 2012, pp. 143-150.

⁸ Parmi les travaux qui s'intéressent au webdoc il est fréquent de retrouver ces mots-clés. Sans doute viennent-ils naturellement à l'esprit lorsque l'on tente de définir ces objets. Cf. par exemple : Evelyne Broudoux, « Le Documentaire élargi au web », dans Françoise Paquien-séguy (sous la direction de), *Les Enjeux de l'information et de la communication*, dossier : « Information publique : stratégies de production, dispositifs de diffusion et usages sociaux », vol 12, n° 2, 2011, pp. 25-42 ; Samuel Gantier, Laure Bolka, « L'Expérience immersive du webdocumentaire : étude de cas et pistes de réflexion », dans *Cahiers du journalisme*, automne 2011, pp. 118-133 ; Cédric Mal, « Vous avez dit (web)documentaire ? », cit.

⁹ Soulignons qu'il existe deux manières de développer le projet d'un webdoc. Soit, l'auteur conçoit sa structure en s'appuyant sur une architecture organisée autour des possibilités offertes par l'un de ces logiciels (comme quand l'on crée un blog personnel à partir Wordpress : c'est le cas de *Archiving R69* de Monica Kin Gagnon, 2011, avec Korsakov, par exemple), soit le projet s'appuie sur de la programmation en bonne et due forme, donnant naissance à un objet à la forme complètement inédite (comme dans les cas des *blockbuster* de l'ONF : *Fort McMoney* (David Dufresne, 2013 - ONF et ARTE), par exemple. Dans les milieux professionnels la deuxième tendance est plus prisee, mais elle délègue une partie de la création à des entreprises de web design (par exemple : Deux Huit Huit, Département, Upian, Darjeeling, Honkytonk). De leur côté, les auteurs qui produisent en toute indépendance vont probablement s'appuyer sur ces logiciels qui, si d'une part, les limitent dans les possibilités visuelles et de montage, d'autre part, leur permettent une souplesse dans le travail artisanal et n'impliquent pas des connaissances de programmation informatique poussées.

À propos du webdocumentaire, entre interfaces et découvertes

¹⁰ Sur ces questions, qui du database mènent à l'interface, on pourra revoir le classique Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge 2001 et Alexander Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2012.

¹¹ Elle est de plus en plus répandue dans le documentaire contemporain, même dans des productions qui veulent s'adresser au grand public (marquant une influence esthétique en retour, depuis le web – qui rassemble des images de toutes factures – vers le cinéma, comme dans la production des dernières années sur les printemps arabes) et elle est constitutive des images en mouvement dans les webdocs.

¹² Des études sur ces phénomènes, depuis leurs premiers temps, pourront se retrouver chez François Albera, « Archéologie de l'intermédialité : SME / CD-ROM, l'apesanteur », dans *CiNéMAS : revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 10, n° 2-3, printemps 2000, pp. 27-38; Caroline Martel, « Our Secret Century : archives filmiques, nouveaux médias et historiographie », dans *Sociétés et représentations*, n° 9, avril 2000, pp. 241-248. Plus en général, au moment du tournant numérique : Philippe Quéau, *METAXU : théorie de l'art intermédiaire*, Champ Vallon, Seyssel 1989 ; Edmond Couchot, *La Technologie dans l'art : de la photographie à la réalité virtuelle*, Jacqueline Chambon, Nîmes 1998 ; Jean-Louis Boissier, *La Relation comme forme. L'interactivité en art* (nouvelle éd. augmentée), Les Presses du réel, Dijon 2009.

¹³ Cf. Charles Acland, Haidee Wasson (sous la direction de), *Useful Cinema*, Duke University Press, Durham 2011.

¹⁴ Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 2001.

¹⁵ Sur notre emploi de la notion de prototype : Viva Paci, *Regarder la machine*, dans *La Machine à voir : à propos de cinéma, attraction, exhibition*, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, Lille 2012.

¹⁶ Une autre voie possible pour retracer l'histoire du webdocumentaire le relie aux exigences économiques de création de contenus audiovisuels originaux afin d'étoffer les sites Internet, au tournant des années 2000. Ces contenus répondaient vraisemblablement à une volonté d'augmentation du trafic, inscrite dans la logique des portails et dans le but de monnayer les visites par la publicité. Quelques années plus tard, on retrouve une logique semblable sur les sites web des organes de presse. A la reproduction des articles de la version papier, on associe des créations audiovisuelles, extension du photojournalisme.

¹⁷ Ces conférences faisaient souvent l'objet de comptes rendus dans des revues de vulgarisation scientifique. Cf. ces revues françaises qui, au tournant du XX^e siècle, semblaient s'imposer dans les débats de l'époque comme instruments de communication des sciences, axés sur les curiosités. Des revues qui se démarquent, avant tout, par leurs illustrations, ainsi que par la diversité des sujets traités (de la zoologie et de la physique aux grands industriels, en passant par l'actualité et les faits divers), et qui ne s'affichaient pas comme revues savantes, comme pouvaient le faire à la même époque *La Revue scientifique* (1884-1954) ou *L'Année scientifique et industrielle* (1855-1913). Nous nommons ainsi : *La Nature*, *Revue des sciences et de leurs applications aux arts et à l'industrie*, *Revue hebdomadaire illustrée* (1873-1964), *La Science illustrée. Journal hebdomadaire* (1887-1905), *La Science au XX^e siècle. Nouvelle revue illustrée des sciences et de leurs applications* (1903-1914) et *La Science française. Revue populaire illustrée* (1890-1901). Cf. Viva Paci, *Les Visions d'un scientifique récalcitrant*, dans André Gaudreault, Laurent Le Forestier (sous la direction de), *Méliès au carrefour des attractions*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Rennes 2014, pp. 279-290. Bien que certaines séances aient été réservées à un public restreint, celles de l'Académie des sciences par exemple, d'autres communications étaient publiques et attiraient les foules : « [...] c'était continuer la série des conférences d'actualités scientifiques inaugurées en 1894 et qui ont à diverses reprises attiré tant d'auditeurs au Jardin des Plantes.

Ce fut certainement une bonne idée et qu'on n'avait eue jusque-là, d'utiliser les magnifiques ressources du Muséum pour constituer un enseignement populaire où le public serait mis au courant de ce qui concerne les chapitres de la science dont relèvent les événements qui fixent pour un moment l'attention générale ». D. [dans le texte, NDA], « Conférences populaires du muséum », dans *La Nature. Revue des sciences et de leurs applications aux arts et à l'industrie*, vol. 30, n° 1489-1514, 1902, p. 334. En ligne : <http://cnum.cnam.fr/CGI/fpage.cgi?4KY28.58/338/100/532/0/0>, dernier accès le 18 novembre 2013. La science dont on parle ici ne relève certes pas des sciences dures.

¹⁸ On retrouve des matériaux directement reliés à ce voyage de recherche naturaliste dans *La Nature* mais aussi dans *La Science illustrée* (volumes numérisés disponibles en ligne : <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb32865908q/date.r=la+science+illustr%C3%A9e.langFR>), et dans *La Science au XX^e siècle* (volumes numérisés disponibles en ligne : <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb328658507/date.r=la+science+illustr%C3%A9e.langFR>), entre le premier semestre 1902 et la fin de 1908.

The American Medical Association is a non-profit corporation organized for the purpose of promoting the interests of the medical profession and the public. It was founded in 1847 and has since that time been the leading organization of the medical profession in the United States. The Association is composed of more than 50,000 members, who are physicians, surgeons, dentists, and other medical practitioners. The Association's primary purpose is to advance the science and art of medicine, to improve the quality of medical education, and to protect the public interest in the medical profession. The Association accomplishes these purposes through a variety of activities, including the publication of the Journal, the holding of annual meetings, the establishment of committees and commissions, and the advocacy of legislation and public policy. The Journal is one of the most important of the Association's activities, and it is the primary source of information for the medical profession and the public. The Journal is published weekly, except on Sundays and public holidays, and it contains a wide variety of articles, including original research, clinical reports, reviews, and editorials. The Journal is also a forum for the discussion of important medical issues and for the expression of the views of the medical profession on these issues.

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History, Film, and Mafia Narratives. The Case of Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano*

The following article takes its cue from Michel Foucault's notion that "in our time history aspires to the condition of archaeology," and that such a condition has led to "the individualization of different series, which are juxtaposed to one another, follow one another, overlap and intersect, without one being able to reduce them to a linear schema."¹ This type of archaeological individualization, Foucault goes on to say, "deprives us of our continuities; it dissipates the temporal identity in which we are pleased to look at ourselves when we wish to exorcise the discontinuities of history; it breaks the thread of transcendental teleologies."²

Mindful of Foucault's precepts and the sharp challenge they issue against the traditional claims of empirical history, in what follows I will argue that in unearthing the remains of the past and in striving to make its ghosts speak, the mechanism of representation in Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962) is one which reveals ruptures, discontinuities, and mutations rather than a continuity of events making up one great, uninterrupted unity. This is a historically unsettling film where film language dispenses with the conventional syntax of the linear filmic sequence, and eschews realistic narrative in favour of unpredictable ellipsis and fragmentation. This is a mode of excavation which reminds us that we are often a little too univocal if we believe that we can rethink the past through one foundational epistemology, or through notions which ground traditional historiography such as logical explanation, causal structures, totalities and closure.

In advocating the need for a hermeneutic procedure which distances itself from the conventional methodology of empirical history, by no means am I asserting that "historiophoty," or the representation of history through "visual images and filmic discourse," to use Hayden White's illuminating distinction, is invariably more effective in conveying the complexity of historical thinking than "historiography," or "the representation of history in verbal images and written discourse."³ Following Robert Rosenstone, I am instead arguing that history does not necessarily need to be done on the written page since visual devices can also be profitably utilized.⁴ In fact, it would be anomalous, with a medium like film, not to deploy to the fullest the endless resources that its own

capabilities of sight, sound, editing and location give it, both in form and in content, and in which it may have advantages over written discourse that those who point to the depths of the latter can sometimes overlook. What I am primarily concerned with for the purpose of this paper, therefore, is how the excavation of the past is thematically, formally, and phenomenologically different when the work in question is one of cinematic representation rather than written discourse. It is within this context that I will be exploring Rosi's distinctive relationship with the traces of the world of the past and his ability to create multiple perspectives which purposefully fail to coalesce in linear succession, or in a coherent meaning of events. I will also examine Rosi's intrapenetrative time and its "pluridimensionality," as Gian Piero Brunetta defines it, in which "reversibility and irreversibility, circularity and linearity, the flux of modernity and the stasis of myth coexist and become one."⁵ By adopting an "anti-narrative" and "labyrinthine" style to convey such a temporal structure,⁶ Rosi's film refuses the logic of absolutism and opens itself up to new investigative possibilities through disruptions in strict chronology. In examining these formal features which allow Rosi to destabilize long-held assumptions and certainties I will contend that even though *Salvatore Giuliano* is rigorously based on verifiable historical evidence, his depiction of events does not originate in opposition with mythic discourse but rather in interaction with its components.⁷ The focus of inquiry will therefore centre on the effacement of any distinction between history and myth, between realism and "the metaphysical dimension,"⁸ as Rosi himself calls it, rather than on the unbridgeable gap which is traditionally regarded as separating the two.

At this juncture, it may be useful to recall some of the pivotal historical moments leading to and following the death of Salvatore Giuliano, who has inspired an impressive amount of biographical works, plays and ballads.⁹ On 2 September 1943, the twenty-year-old Giuliano made a dramatic entrance into the scenario of social banditry during a black market operation in which he killed a *carabiniere* and was himself wounded. This incident marked the beginning of the career of "the King of Montelepre," whose initiation into the life of outlawry conformed to the archetype of an "honourable" bandit capable of resisting oppressive authority and of defending the peasants against injustice. Such a perception was to some extent marred by Giuliano's involvement on 1 May 1947 in one of the most violent events following the Second World War: the Portella della Ginestra massacre in which 11 people were killed and many more were wounded during a peaceful Labour Day celebration. Three years later, on 5 July 1950, the bullet-riddled corpse of Giuliano was found in a courtyard in Castelvetro: the official version stating that the bandit had been killed in an ambush prepared by the *carabinieri* was short-lived and easily dismantled. Barely a year after Giuliano's death, during the trial against the perpetrators for the massacre at Portella della Ginestra held in Viterbo in 1950-1951, Gaspare Pisciotta, Giuliano's cousin and right-hand man, made some stunning revelations: he first declared that he was responsible for Giuliano's death and then went on to accuse a number of high-ranking officials and politicians, among whom the Minister of the Interior Mario Scelba, of having ordered the Portella della Ginestra massacre.¹⁰ On 9 February 1954, only a few days before he was to be tried for Giuliano's murder, Pisciotta was killed in the Ucciardone prison in Palermo with a heavy dose of strychnine in obscure circumstances. All the heavily-guarded secrets on Giuliano's murder and the Portella della Ginestra massacre which Pisciotta had promised to unravel during his trial were thus destined to die with him.

In Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano*, the events which have just been chronologically outlined take on the disconcerting cast of an inconclusive police report, in which the congeries of multiple voices constantly undermine any apparent certainties and point to irreconcilable versions of the "truth."¹¹ The linearity of events is eschewed as the viewer travels backward and forward in time through the deployment of flashbacks and flashforwards. For instance, the opening sequence depicting the discovery of Giuliano's corpse in 1950 in Castelvetro is abruptly followed by a second temporal block set five years earlier in which crowds demonstrate in favour of Sicilian independence. A third sequence takes the viewer back to 1950 in Castelvetro in which the police transport

Giuliano's corpse to the morgue while reporters begin to seriously probe the reliability of the official report on the bandit's death. The viewer is then transported back in time to Montelepre in 1946 during a massive campaign in which the *carabinieri* and the police are seen scouring the village for the elusive Giuliano. The shift to the morgue which follows recalls the first segment depicting the discovery of the bullet-riddled corpse of Giuliano. Though the focus of attention is once again the corporeality of Giuliano's lifeless body, the sequence showing Giuliano's mother weeping desperately over her son's body now takes on the aura of mysticism typical of a Pietà. The aura of sacrality is however brusquely dispelled in the following flashback which shows the brutal massacre in Portella della Ginestra on 1 May 1947. The rest of the film depicts a completely different set of temporal and spatial segments which primarily unfold in the courtroom in Viterbo in 1950-1951 and will eventually lead to Pisciotta's murder in the Ucciardone prison in 1954. In the concluding segment a flashforward transports the viewer to the horsemarket in Monreale in 1960; the corpse of the Mafia intermediary Benedetto Minasola is seen sprawled on the ground in a position which recalls the overhead shot of Giuliano's body in Castelvetro with which the film opened.¹² In this enigmatic sequence in which the ending recalls the beginning, the present is thus revealed as the site where the past with its heavy burden is mysteriously re-enacted, though it will not yield its secrets.

Rosi describes these shifts in time as a new kind of trope which is not used "only for the temporal, the time, aspect," but rather "to communicate to the audience the impossibility of reaching the truth."¹³ Taking as a cue Maureen Turim's analysis of Gérard Genette's formulations on the combination of analepses and ellipses within narrative textuality, I have elsewhere already described Rosi's flashbacks as a series of analepses which refrain from retrospectively filling in the ellipses as flashbacks conventionally do.¹⁴ In terms of narrative function, such flashbacks are instead used to leave gaps unfilled, questions are raised only to remain unanswered, and each shift from one temporality to another takes place abruptly, without the accompaniment of any form of film punctuation such as the dissolve, which would allow the transition to take place more smoothly.¹⁵ Drawing on Joshua Hirsch's work on the "afterimage," Rosi's flashbacks may be defined as "posttraumatic flashbacks" which function as "signifiers of trauma," as "a medium for the transmission of real traumatic experience."¹⁶ Rather than working merely on the level of content by conveying the painful memory of a traumatic event, Rosi's "posttraumatic flashbacks" also disturb the spectator on a formal level through the use of unexpected narrative time jumps which undermine the feeling of mastery over time and the intelligibility of the classical flashback.¹⁷ As Anton Giulio Mancino and Sandro Zambetti suggest, rather than focalized, interior flashbacks which are actively sought by the characters as they strive to gain access to their past, Rosi's flashbacks are completely "extraneous" to the characters and are motivated instead by the director himself whose intent is not to make the past intelligible but, on the contrary, to posit new questions and to expose the elusiveness of the truth.¹⁸

As cinematic temporalities thus merge into one another, the possibility of establishing some form of historical causality linking past and present events to one another is repeatedly thwarted. Within this "system of Chinese boxes,"¹⁹ each unexpected turn of events prompts fresh attempts at interpretation, despite the awareness that even the most meticulous work of excavation will not produce any conclusive results. As the reliability of the evidence in hand becomes more dubious, unresolved questions incessantly give rise to further questions. What sort of collusion existed between Giuliano, the Mafia and the police authorities? What exactly was the bandit's involvement in the massacre at Portella della Ginestra? Was he ordered by the Mafia and by representatives of the Christian Democratic Party to shoot on the peaceful crowd of demonstrators, as a number of historians have alleged? Who was responsible for tampering with the ballistic evidence which might have shed some light on the identity of the perpetrators who shot on the crowd, and on their exact location during the massacre? Who killed Giuliano? What motivated Pisciotta to confess to the bandit's murder a year later? If, indeed, it was Gaspare Pisciotta who killed Giuliano, who had commissioned the murder? And finally, who was responsible for

Pisciotta's own murder just a few days before he was to provide testimony on Giuliano's death and the Portella della Ginestra massacre? What secrets would Pisciotta have unravelled on the collusion between "la Santissima Trinità," or "the Holy Trinity," as Pisciotta called it, made up of the "bandits, the Mafia and the 'carabinieri?'"²⁰ These and many other related questions remain unanswered. Up till this very day, the Giuliano story is considered as one of the most significant cases of "omertà di Stato" following World War II, not only because of the underlying collusion between organized crime and politics, but also because all its protagonists were assassinated in mysterious circumstances.²¹ With the murder of Pisciotta, in particular, the key figure who could have exposed the mechanism of political cover-up and intrigue, the events leading to and following the massacre at Portella were to remain shrouded in silence.²² In fact, despite the persistence of varying degrees of disagreement on what really happened, historians from Francesco Renda and Michele Pantaleone to Giuseppe Casarrubea and Vincenzo Vatile unanimously agree that the story of Italy's most celebrated bandit constitutes one of the greyest and most undecipherable moments in the history of Italy's First Republic.²³ As Vivien Sobchack would put it, scholars researching the Giuliano case are bound to conclude that "notions of both rationality and system are undermined by the visible evidence that 'History' is the concatenated and reified effect of incoherent motives and chance convergences."²⁴

It is the highly ambiguous content of such an objectively ungraspable chain of events that determines the structure of Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano*. As the director himself reiterates on a number of occasions, it is "the investigative research that provides the narrative structure" for his film, and that enables him to communicate to the audience the "many doubts, many uncertainties" which ultimately make the truth so elusive.²⁵ Rosi explains that even the bipartite structure of the film which rotates round two focal events – the discovery of Giuliano's corpse and the trial in Viterbo – stems directly from the research he conducted:

*The structure of the film came to me by itself on two different axes, the trial in Viterbo and the corpse of Giuliano. These facts gave me two possibilities: the first one was to make the spectator understand what happened through the emotions tied to the discovery of the corpse; the second was to link all the facts during the trial, as a sort of re-enactment of all the contradictions which had been viewed before. These contradictions were relived through the presiding judge of the tribunal, who was the first person to be completely startled by the questions [...]. The judge was a person endowed with a set of old-fashioned moral principles, and he now had to face unbelievable scandals with ramifications involving the highest ranks, even on an international level, such as America, the CIA.*²⁶

The trial in Viterbo for the Portella della Ginestra massacre proved to be fruitless in its attempt to unearth the truth that lay buried under mounds of untrustworthy evidence.²⁷ Rosi takes up arms on behalf of this muted story by turning its silence and the obscurities that have supplanted its repressed voice into a hermeneutic tool with which he excavates his object of research and descends to its deepest levels. In doing so, Rosi invents an utterly new kind of cinematic "narrative" in which he himself impersonates the disembodied voice of the narrator and thus becomes part of the investigative research he is examining. Seemingly both inside and outside the parameters of official knowledge, Rosi's dispassionate voice collapses the gap separating him from the violent events he describes at the same time as it permits him to select and organize the information he has acquired. Drawing on Jacques Rancière's analysis of the methodological procedure adopted by Michelet, and on Hayden White's observations of such an analysis, Rosi, like Michelet, can be regarded as a researcher who recounts the facts pertaining to Giuliano's story not "as the dead indices of events now past" but "as fragments of the past still living in the present."²⁸ Or to put it in slightly different terms, Rosi's disembodied voice becomes the voice or the double of the traces of the past which still weigh heavily on the present, as tenuous and elusive as those traces may be.

But if the voice of the narrator comes across as that of a tireless excavator, at the same time the absence of a controlling viewpoint turns him into a knowing victim of the story he is unable to master. As Umberto Eco writes:

The truth is that in the story of Giuliano, in the very nature of his rapport with the mafia and with the police, or of the police with the carabinieri, or of Giuliano with Pisciotta, and so on, no one knows the facts exactly. In short, the particular narrative technique devolves from the actual 'content' of the film and constitutes its most important statement: an unclear story is told to the viewer by an author who is the victim of the same obscurity and who does not want to cheat him by clarifying facts that are not clear, but wants to leave all doubts intact. So the director seems to let his film be organized by the situation rather than organizing the situation through the film.²⁹

As opposed to the traditional film narrator, therefore, whose function is to furnish guidance to the viewer from a superior or dominant point of view, Rosi takes on the conventional tone of the voice-over commentator only to question the knowledge that he is conveying. To a great extent, Rosi's acousmatic voice, to use the term used by Michel Chion to describe "a sound that is heard without its cause or source being seen," belongs to the "species of doubting acousmètres, deprived of thorough and omniscient knowledge."³⁰ The aura of impenetrable doubt created by Rosi's distinctive use of the voice over is reinforced by the invisibility of the figure of Giuliano who takes on the physicality of a human figure only in death, in the establishing sequences as he lies in the courtyard in Castelvetro, and then again in the morgue. The camera refrains from depicting him in close-ups while he is still alive but largely portrays him instead in long shots or extreme long shots, thus maintaining a distance between him and the spectator which is breached only after his death. As Mancino and Zambetti write, "Giuliano [...] exists fully as a character without nearly ever appearing on the screen precisely because it is the political role that he was made to play that gave him any substance."³¹ Such a depiction, Mancino and Zambetti go on to say, prevents Giuliano from taking on distinctive psychological connotations and, very importantly, avoids the risk of transcending into myth.³²

Giuliano's intangibility is perhaps one of the film's most intriguing aspects which has given rise to a number of divergent readings. In a vein that is analogous to that of Mancino and Zambetti, the readings by Paolo Rossi, Tullio Kezich, Vittorio Albano, Michele Marangi and Paolo Rossi support the theory that because of his invisibility, Giuliano does not take on a mystical or legendary cast.³³ In striking opposition to such a view, Leonardo Sciascia, in one of the more memorable readings of Rosi's film, contends that if Giuliano had been more visible, he might have degenerated into "an insignificant, sad character; without a legend, or a myth."³⁴ Instead, for a Sicilian audience, Giuliano's invisibility reinforces the popular myth of the honourable bandit by lending it an aura of profound mysticism. Sciascia writes:

For Rosi, [...] invisibility was a form of judgment conveyed through images [...] for our spectator invisibility instead was a form of mysticism: Giuliano as the very concept of a revolt against the State, of social vendetta, of the redemption of the poor. A white raincoat and binoculars, as if they were attributes of the idea: whiteness, distance. And he turns into corporeality, the bandit, on the dust of De Maria's courtyard, on the marble slab, in the squalid morgue, amidst the tears and in the arms of his mother. A deposition from the cross, a Christ [...]. By relegating him to invisibility, Rosi harshens the severity of his accusations against the ruling class; but at the same time, for the Sicilian public, it only reinforced the myth.³⁵

Whatever one's views on the resonances of Giuliano's invisibility, by restricting the camera's gaze on the bandit while he is still alive, Rosi creates a distancing effect which conveys the idea that he is more interested in the political events that engulfed Giuliano and his men rather than in Giuliano himself. Significantly enough, while the narratorial commentary may give the impression that it is refraining from openly evaluating and judging these political events, at the same time it is this very same voice that acts as a filter through which the events

that are depicted on the screen are selected, organized, and therefore also interpreted. In fact Rosi argues that in shooting *Salvatore Giuliano*, his intent was first and foremost to "interpret" reality, unlike the films belonging to the first phase of neorealism which wanted "to be a witness to reality, with no critical perspective, just a desire to record reality."³⁶ Rosi goes on to say that in "interpreting" the events which his film depicts, he wanted to distance himself not only from what he defines as the "schematicism" of this initial phase of neorealism, but also from the techniques of representation deployed in documentaries. He contends that although his point of departure is verifiable documentation insofar as "the truth very often contains much more imagination than fiction," his procedure does not involve "a documentary way of making films but a documented way."³⁷ Historical facts alone cannot explain the artistic configuration of an event in a film, which is why, Rosi says, the most crucial element for him is "the interpretation of the facts."³⁸

*For Giuliano I put together an incredible amount of documentation: photos, articles, sentences that were read and reread by my co-screenwriters, thousands of photos. [...] A very elaborate job and also a very scrupulous one. However, once this is accomplished, I do not go over the material once again, I forget everything, I set aside everything. [...] I am shooting a film, not a history lesson, or an essay on economics. Through the film I convey my personal relationship with that reality, my interpretation, my point of view. [...] When the film came out many referred to it as a documentary, but no film is more constructed than Salvatore Giuliano, no film is more removed from the documentary.*³⁹

That the documentary is as impartial as Rosi seems to be implying is of course hugely debatable. Setting aside any reservations regarding such a notion on the supposed neutrality of the documentary, what is important for the purpose of this paper is Rosi's insistence on the hermeneutic desire that propels his narrative and acts as a spur to artistic "construction." Interpreting historical events through their aestheticization, however, does not mean that facts are "invented" or "created." In a recent book-length interview with Giuseppe Tornatore, Rosi reiterates that every single event depicted in *Salvatore Giuliano* can be "verified, literally everything," and that everything "really happened" the way it is portrayed in the film.⁴⁰ Historical facts, therefore, are not laced through with fictive elements to add suspense; and gaps or aporias are not filled in with invented events. Instead, what Rosi provides his audience with is glimpses, forays, and partial truths on past events. This is why Rosi's self-reflexive description of his mechanism of narration as incomplete rather than totalizing, as a construction rather than a mere reproduction, as an interpretation rather than a creation, as a distinctly personal point of view rather than an omniscient one, and finally, as a mediated and carefully choreographed artefact rather than an unmediated and spontaneous one, can be profitably reformulated in the words by Pierre Macherey, whose observations on history and reflection theory deserve to be quoted at some length:

*In effect, the relationship between the mirror and what it reflects (the historical reality) is partial: the mirror selects, it does not reflect everything. [...] Thus the image of history in the mirror will not be a reflection in the precise sense of a reproduction or facsimile. [...] The secret of the mirror is to be sought in the form of its reflections; how does it show historical reality, by what paradox does it make visible its own blindness without actually seeing itself? [...] 'The expression of contradictory conditions,' the work must therefore 'reflect,' independently of its fragmented reality [...] the ensemble of the contradictions which define the historical situation as an insufficiency. [...] the work is defined by its lack, its incompleteness. [...] These absences make it exist, make it irreplaceable. The mirror is expressive in what it does not reflect as much as what it does reflect. The absence of certain reflections, expressions – these are the true object of criticism.*⁴¹

In Machereyian terms, what lends Rosi's "mirror" its "irreplaceable" cast with its fragmented reflection of Sicilian reality is precisely its insufficiency, its absences, its lack. It is its very blindness that allows its viewer to

see in the mirror's incomplete reflection the cracks and the fissures of the historical situation which produced it. By alloying the findings of Macherey with those of Rancière, one can argue that paradoxically the muted and repressed chain of historical events surrounding Giuliano speaks so forcefully in Rosi's cinematic depiction precisely because it is allowed to do so only as a silent story.⁴²

But what exactly makes the "mirroring" of historical reconstruction in film different from that which is "reflected" on the page, if one can still talk about "reflection"? Are historical films all "fictional," as Pierre Sorlin polemically asserts when he writes that even the most meticulously researched films "reconstruct in a purely imaginary way the greater part of what they show?"⁴³ Or is visual evidence, both photographic and cinematic, capable of furnishing the basis for "a reproduction of the scenes and atmosphere of past events more accurate than any derived from verbal testimony alone?"⁴⁴ In striving to answer these questions particularly with regard to a filmmaker "endowed with a historian's eye," as Natalie Davis would put it,⁴⁵ I tend to follow Francesco Renda, one of the foremost authorities on the history of Sicily and, most significantly, an ocular witness of the Portella della Ginestra massacre. In his analysis of Rosi's depiction of this event, Renda quotes the filmmaker who says that by casting as extras the same people who had witnessed the massacre only a decade before, he injected the film with a powerful "emotional" quality that managed to reproduce as closely as possible what really happened a decade before. Renda adds that it is precisely because of this "form of trauma of an emotional nature," as Rosi calls it, *Salvatore Giuliano* contains "the truest, the most evocative and the most intriguing representation" of the massacre, one whose "images say more than words."⁴⁶

According to Renda's subtle analysis, the emotional appeal of the sight, sound, location and editing of cinema can create and carry more truthful meanings than written discourse in the portrayal of such historical moments as the Portella della Ginestra massacre. By asserting that Rosi's "historiophotic" representation is endowed with greater accuracy than any other traditional "historiographic" rendition of this event, Renda is consciously attempting to broaden the scope of historical scholarship and to move it in new directions. Rather than perceiving fact and fiction as working antagonistically against one another, Renda argues that "the breath of poetry" resulting from a carefully choreographed cinematic treatment such as the choice of lenses, lighting, location, music and sound effects can complement and even enhance historical authenticity.⁴⁷ This is why, as I suggested earlier, the film's scrupulously documented investigation of historical facts does not originate in opposition to "a certain metaphysical dimension," as Rosi calls it, but rather in interaction with it.⁴⁸

Based on instinct and emotion, the portrayal of such episodes as the massacre at Portella della Ginestra aspire to the status of exemplary stories of an archaic type that transcend both truth and falsity, both historical authenticity and historical inauthenticity.⁴⁹ This is because the dramatic effectiveness of the "truth" embedded in the representation of these historical episodes derives from emotionally charged sentiments that are deeply rooted in the collective unconscious, and which are therefore universally felt.⁵⁰ Within this type of reading, another privileged locus in Rosi's film which exemplifies a similar interaction of myth and history is the poignant sequence in the morgue depicting Giuliano's mother mourning her son.⁵¹ Lying on a slab of marble in a position which is reminiscent of Mantegna's "Lamentation over the Dead Christ," or of Caracci's "The Dead Christ Mourned," Giuliano takes on the hagiographic corporeality of the "heroic dead" in all its poignancy.⁵² Thus, at the very moment in which a historical event moves towards realistic representation, it seamlessly also moves towards the poetical and the metaphysical.

The purpose of this essay was to suggest that a film endowed with historical vision can unearth and bring into visibility events of the past that have been suppressed nearly to the point of effacement. In the process, the inherent limits of such an enterprise are self-reflexively exposed since the descent into even the deepest levels of the object of research will yield only fragments, particles, at best fractured truths. It is by highlighting these

fragmented particles that Rosi creates in the audience an awareness of the extent to which the truth has been systemically buried under mounds of misleading evidence. Rather than suggesting that historiophoty can offer an unmediated access to the secrets of the past, Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* invites the audience to actively participate in bridging the gap between past and present, even though such a gap will never be filled, and complete intelligibility will remain forever beyond reach.

Notes

¹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Routledge, London-New York 1969, pp. 8-9.

² *Idem*, p. 147.

³ Hayden White, "Historiography and Historiophoty," in *American Historical Review*, vol. 93, no. 5, 1988, pp. 1193-1199.

⁴ Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past. The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA-London 1995, p. 11.

⁵ Gian Piero Brunetta, *Rosi e il tempo del sud*, in Sebastiano Gesù (ed.), *Francesco Rosi*, Incontri con il cinema, Acicatena 1991, p. 41 (my translation).

⁶ On the film's structure, see among others Pierre Sorlin, *Sociologia del cinema*, Garzanti, Milano 1979, pp. 266-267; Gaetana Marrone, *Francesco Rosi e la critica americana*, in Sebastiano Gesù (ed.), *Francesco Rosi*, cit., p. 80; Michele Marangi, Paolo Rossi, *La mafia è cosa nostra. 10 film sull'onorata società*, Edizioni Gruppo Abele, Torino 1993, p. 26; Anton Giulio Mancino, Sandro Zambetti, *Francesco Rosi*, Il Castoro, Milano 1998, pp. 44-47; Vittorio Albano, *La mafia nel cinema siciliano. Da In nome della legge a Placido Rizzotto*, Barbieri Editore, Manduria 2003, p. 23.

⁷ For an earlier treatment of the interaction between realistic and mythic discourse in Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano*, see Gloria Lauri-Lucente, "The Narrative of Myth and Realism in Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* and Michael Cimino's *The Sicilian*," in *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies*, vol. 12, 2013, pp. 211-227.

⁸ See the interview with Francesco Rosi titled *Interview with Francesco Rosi*, in Carlo Testa (ed.), *Poet of Civic Courage. The Films of Francesco Rosi*, Flicks Books, Bath 1996, p. 146.

⁹ Numerous historians have treated the events surrounding the story of Salvatore Giuliano. See, for example, Giuseppe Casarrubea, *Salvatore Giuliano. Morte di un capobanda e dei suoi luogotenenti*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2001; Francesco Renda, *Salvatore Giuliano. Una biografia storica*, Sellerio, Palermo 2002; Lucio Galluzzo, *Storia di Salvatore Giuliano*, Flaccovio Editore, Palermo 2007; Enzo Catania, *Salvatore Giuliano. Capostipite dei misteri d'Italia*, Aliberti Editore, Roma 2011; Giuseppe Casarrubea, Mario José Cereghino, *La scomparsa di Salvatore Giuliano. Indagine su un fantasma eccellente*, Bompiani, Milano 2013; Carlo Ruta (ed.), *L'affare Giuliano. I documenti che rivelano il primo patto tra Stato e Mafia nel tempo della Repubblica*, AccadeinSicilia Libri, Milano 2013.

¹⁰ On Pisciotta's revelations, see Giuseppe Casarrubea, *Salvatore Giuliano. Morte di un capobanda e dei suoi luogotenenti*, cit., pp. 154-158.

¹¹ Much has been written on the elusive nature of truth in *Salvatore Giuliano*. See for example Sebastiano Gesù, *Rosi, un autore pertinace*, in Id., *Francesco Rosi*, cit., p. 9; Laura Wittman, *Francesco Rosi's Salvatore Giuliano*, in Dana Renga (ed.), *Mafia Movies. A Reader*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto-Buffalo-London 2011, p. 214.

- ¹² On the links between the opening sequence and the concluding one, see Anton Giulio Mancino, Sandro Zambetti, *Francesco Rosi*, cit., p. 49.
- ¹³ Gary Crowdus, Dan Georgakos, "The Audience Should Not Be Just Passive Spectators. An Interview with Francesco Rosi," in *Cinéaste*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1975, p. 4.
- ¹⁴ For the analysis of the function of flashbacks, I am indebted to Maureen Turim's *Flashbacks in Film. Memory and History*, Routledge, New York-London 1989, pp. 1-20.
- ¹⁵ P. Adams Sitney, *Vital Crises in Italian Cinema*, University of Texas Press, Austin 1995, p. 203. Sitney points out that a fadeout is used only once to distinguish between one temporal segment and another.
- ¹⁶ Joshua Hirsch, *Afterimage. Film, Trauma, and the Holocaust*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia 2004, pp. 92-99.
- ¹⁷ *Ibidem*.
- ¹⁸ Anton Giulio Mancino, Sandro Zambetti, *Francesco Rosi*, cit., p. 45.
- ¹⁹ Giuseppe Casarrubea, *Salvatore Giuliano. Morte di un capobanda e dei suoi luogotenenti*, cit., p. 177.
- ²⁰ Vincenzo Vasile, *Salvatore Giuliano*, in Claudio Camarca (ed.), *Dizionario enciclopedico della Mafie in Italia*, Lit Edizioni, Roma 2013, p. 392.
- ²¹ Michele Pantaleone, *Omertà di stato. Da Salvatore Giuliano a Totò Riina*, Giulio Pironti Editore, Napoli 1993, p. 33.
- ²² Giuseppe Casarrubea, *Salvatore Giuliano. Morte di un capobanda e dei suoi luogotenenti*, cit., pp. 154-159.
- ²³ On the crucial figure of Pisciotta see *Ibidem*.
- ²⁴ Vivian Sobchack, *Introduction: History Happens*, in Id. (ed.), *The Persistence of History. Cinema, Television and the Modern Event*, Routledge, New York-London 1996, p. 2.
- ²⁵ Gary Crowdus, Dan Georgakos, "The Audience Should Not Be Just Passive Spectators. An Interview with Francesco Rosi," cit., p. 4, 6.
- ²⁶ Francesco Rosi quoted in Michele Marangi, Paolo Rossi, *La mafia è cosa nostra. 10 film sull'onorata società*, cit., p. 34 (my translation).
- ²⁷ For a meticulously researched portrayal of Pisciotta's testimony in the Viterbo trial, see Paolo Benvenuti's excellent film *Segreti di Stato* (2003). See also Paola Baroni, Paolo Benvenuti, Nicola Tranfaglia (eds.), *Segreti di Stato. Dai documenti al film*, Fandango Libri, Roma 2003.
- ²⁸ Hayden White, *Foreword*, in Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History. On the Poetics of Knowledge*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis-London, 1994, p. XVI (italics in the original).
- ²⁹ Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, quoted in P. Adams Sitney, *Vital Crises in Italian Cinema*, cit., p. 200.
- ³⁰ Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, Columbia University Press, New York 1999, p. 18, p. 55.
- ³¹ Anton Giulio Mancino, Sandro Zambetti, *Francesco Rosi*, cit., p. 40 (my translation).
- ³² *Ibidem*.
- ³³ See Tullio Kezich, *Io c'ero*, in Tullio Kezich, Sebastiano Gesù, *Salvatore Giuliano*, cit., p. 10; Michele Marangi, Paolo Rossi, *La mafia è cosa nostra. 10 film sull'onorata società*, cit., pp. 28-29; and Vittorio Albano, *La mafia nel cinema italiano*, cit., p. 285.
- ³⁴ Leonardo Sciascia, *La vera 'storia' di Giuliano*, in Id., *La corda pazza. Scrittori e cose della Sicilia*, Adelphi, Milano 1991, p. 284 (my translation). For a more extensive analysis of Sciascia's critique of Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano*, see Gloria Lauri-Lucente, *The Narrative of Myth and Realism in Francesco Rosi's Salvatore Giuliano and Michael Cimino's The Sicilian*, cit., pp. 224-225.
- ³⁵ Leonardo Sciascia, *La Sicilia nel cinema*, in Id., cit., p. 286.

- ³⁶ Gary Crowdus, Dan Georgakos, "The Audience Should Not Be Just Passive Spectators. An Interview with Francesco Rosi," cit., p. 6 (italics in the original). Incidentally, it is this focus on interpretation that has led Mancino and Zambetti, among others, to define *Salvatore Giuliano* as a film which signalled the important transition from "the social to the political, from neorealism to critical realism." See Giulio Mancino, Sandro Zambetti, *Francesco Rosi*, cit., p. 34.
- ³⁷ Gary Crowdus, Dan Georgakos, "The Audience Should Not Be Just Passive Spectators. An Interview with Francesco Rosi," cit., p. 8 (italics in the original).
- ³⁸ *Ibidem* (italics in the original).
- ³⁹ Francesco Rosi, quoted in Michele Marangi, Paolo Rossi, *La mafia è cosa nostra. 10 film sull'onorata società*, cit., pp. 33-34 (my translation).
- ⁴⁰ See Francesco Rosi, *Io lo chiamo cinematografo. Conversazione con Giuseppe Tornatore*, Mondadori, Milano 2012, 144.
- ⁴¹ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, Routledge, London-New York, 1978, pp. 134-136, p. 143.
- ⁴² Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History. On the Poetics of Knowledge*, cit., p. 45.
- ⁴³ Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History*, in Marnie Hughes-Warrington (ed.), *The History on Film Reader*, Routledge, London-New York 2009, p. 16.
- ⁴⁴ Hayden White, "Historiography and Historiophoty," cit., p. 1194.
- ⁴⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Any Resemblance to Persons Living or Dead." *Film and the Challenge of Authenticity*, in Marnie Hughes-Warrington (ed.), *The History on Film Reader*, cit., p. 17.
- ⁴⁶ Francesco Renda, *Salvatore Giuliano. Una biografia storica*, cit., p. 47.
- ⁴⁷ *Idem*, pp. 17-18.
- ⁴⁸ Francesco Rosi, in Carlo Testa, *Interview with Francesco Rosi*, cit., p. 146.
- ⁴⁹ David Bidney, *Myth, Symbolism, and Truth*, in Id., *Myth. A Symposium*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington-London 1974, pp. 20-21.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.
- ⁵¹ I am drawing on an earlier treatment of this scene which I have discussed extensively in Gloria Lauri-Lucente, *The Narrative of Realism and Myth in Francesco Rosi's Salvatore Giuliano and Michael Cimino's The Sicilian*, cit., pp. 222-224.
- ⁵² John J. Michalczyk, *The Italian Political Filmmakers*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, Rutherford, NJ 1986, p. 35.

Scale/Scope



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1967 – How to Write the Media History of a Single Year?

1967 is a crucial year for media history in a number of ways – in film history, it is known as the year when the old Hollywood of studios (vertical integration), big-budget and classical style gave way to the “New Hollywood” of *The Graduate* (Mike Nichols) and *Bonnie And Clyde* (Arthur Penn). It is the year when Jean-Luc Godard’s Nouvelle Vague filmmaking transformed into political radicalism with *La Chinoise* and *Weekend*. It is also a crucial year for the New German Cinema, when the first films of Werner Herzog (*Lebenszeichen*), Wim Wenders (*Schauplätze*), and Rainer Werner Fassbinder (the shorts *Das kleine Chaos* and *Der Stadtstreicher*) came out. While these are important trends and events in the US, in France and Germany, my approach will differ in so far as it turns from these canonical examples towards global interconnectedness and transnational complexity; in doing so, I intend to look at a more broad variety of media, as well as at the practices and discourses surrounding these, but also a more diverse array of events, institutions and networks.

In the larger project outlined here, I intend to examine the networks and media archaeology of 1967 through a number of examples such as Expo 67, the world exposition in Montréal, and the avant-garde festival *Exprmntl 4* in Knokke (Belgium), early computer culture and the six-day-war, as well as other instances from media history. The main aim of this text is to outline what such a diachronic *histoire croisée* of a single year is able to highlight and what its own constitutive blind spots might be. Therefore, it seeks to expand in a number of ways on the advances of new film history as it selects its case studies, or rather, to borrow a term from Lisa Parks, its “sites of analyses,”¹ to cast some light on the genealogy of expanded cinema, video installation art, and the practices of media appropriations as well as the non-synchronicity of media history in general.

1. Why a single year?

There are obviously many historiographic models we can turn to – from biography to teleological stories of progress (towards greater realism), from Rankean “how it really was” to recounting how great men performed

great deeds (Edison, Porter, Griffith), or, to make a more theoretical turn, from New Historicism's discourse analysis to Foucaultian and Kittlerian archaeology. Why then, propose yet another approach? First of all, what I intend to do does not claim – implicitly or explicitly – to solve our problems or provide a once-and-for-all solution; it is rather an attempt to make our life and work even more complicated because the matter we are dealing with is complicated; or rather complex, so that our approaches need to mirror this complexity. I am inspired and guided by a number of recent developments, first and foremost the turn to transnational and global history. There are obvious limitations in the range of material any researcher can collect, systematize, understand and process, both in terms of sheer amount as well as regarding access to the field, language skills and work load. In this respect, we can never map a totality, but only try to make a meaningful selection and cover a broad and diverse range of material. All else would be a descent into conspiracy theory: "Conspiracy, one is tempted to say, is the poor person's cognitive mapping in the postmodern age; it is the degraded figure of the total logic of late capital, a desperate attempt to represent the latter's system, whose failure is marked by its slippage into sheer theme and content."² The move beyond comparative history and towards entangled history or "*histoire croisée*" implies a shift of attention towards the interconnectedness of the world we live in. While comparative approaches still think in fairly conventional categories – e.g. comparing the French and the German system of film funding in terms of finance, organization and effects – entangled history opens the focus on interaction, interdependence and complexity. The implicit aim is to multiply perspectives in order to shatter any one dominant reading, and to open up historiography to the potential limitless infinity of empirical reality. It would be a misunderstanding to see a transnational approach as antithetical to regional, national or global histories; instead it complements all these developments by understanding the reciprocity and entanglements of actions and events at different speeds and in different places. Harking back to earlier approaches such as the *Annales* school, and sharing many concerns with postcolonial history, *histoire croisée* is necessarily reflexive as it denies to take one single point of view from which to survey a field. In order to make this multiplication of perspectives productive, one needs to see each of them in relative terms. Therefore, we need a multi-nodal approach that always has to consciously deal with different, even opposing points of view.³

Indeed, this idea appears to be ideally suited for a combination with an archaeological approach which does not seek out novelties and "firsts," but rather looks at the artefacts we come across in our work as relics from a buried civilisation, as fossils we dig up, so to speak. The material under examination is therefore seen as something given (as *datum* or *data*), not as a document, which illustrates a story known in advance or as providing an argument to which one only needed further proof.⁴ These objects are not something we already know, but they are clues towards reconstructing something that remains stubbornly beyond our grasp – this lost world we try to reconstruct, but we invariably fail, hopefully always in more productive terms. As Samuel Beckett has so succinctly put it in what I would see as an appropriate motto: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better."⁵ If we are led by a methodological design that determines a path we are following, we will remain blind to the complex webs of relations characteristic of film and media. Indeed, this proposal is implicitly also meant to question traditional models of causality and agency – by stressing simultaneity and events which are at first sight disconnected, it might allow us to make different connections and think about new connections and agencies. It also raises the question of what is the object of our study: an audio-visual product, an oeuvre, an institution, a network or an event? And how do we define and circumscribe these entities in adequate terms?

2. Why 1967?

1967 is the year that Che Guevara and Konrad Adenauer died, that Kurt Cobain and Benicio del Toro were born; it is the year of *Sergeant Pepper* and *Bonnie and Clyde*, but also of Guy Debord's *La Société du spectacle*

and Jacques Derrida's *De la grammatologie*. It is the year that the first person is cryoconserved (James Bedford, a University of California psychology professor) and the "last good year," according to writer Pierre Berton who takes a decidedly sentimental look at Canada's centennial year.⁶ 1967, not coincidentally perhaps, is exactly halfway between 1945 and 1989, two key-dates with repercussions all across the world, thus separating the period of the cold war into two symmetrical halves.

If taken symbolically, 1967 is the year before the revolution that did not happen, when dreams were shattered and utopias turned sour. It is also – and this provides the key to understanding the significance of this choice – the year that one could single out, somewhat arbitrarily, as the moment when industrial capitalism tipped the scale towards post-Fordist production, when Western consumer capitalism was on the brink of moving from discipline to control, to evoke these Deleuzian terms, or when the "new spirit of capitalism" became visible.⁷ Of course, processes such as these can only with some arbitrariness attributed to a single year. Yet again, the late 1960s appear crucial in a number of ways for a thorough reconfiguration of media and society, for the way conceptions of authoritarian control from outside gave way to cybernetic ideas of self-control and self-guidance through feedback from the inside.

1967 is also a moment of convergence or, at least, contact between different spheres and sectors of society that are usually conceptualized as existing apart and in isolation. At the time, the industry in a wide sense rubbed shoulders with the avant-garde and the countercultural movement – a year later they would find themselves in bitter opposition on the streets of Paris and Prague. In this particular year, a utopian hope for a positive transformation of society is still noticeable, even though it is already tinged with the first hint of a techno-dystopian anticipation. It is this spirit of optimism and possibility, shot through with the apprehension of failure that simultaneously provides the distance and proximity we can feel to the time. Moreover, the idea that the resources of the earth are limited, that all humans share the same planet were becoming commonplace in the late 1960s through global transmission technology, through first noticeable signs of the finitude of the natural resources, as well as through the first photographs taken from outer space. The legendary "Earthrise" was taken in 1968 on the Apollo 8 mission, but it had a black-and-white forerunner in 1966 taken by Lunar Orbiter 1.⁸ It was a year bathed in the glamour of cosmopolitanism, but interlaced with parochialism and nationalism. It was a year when everything still appeared possible, but one could already sense that this might not be for the better.

3. What to look at?

One year in the 20th century does obviously generate a lot more material than any single person can thoroughly research and digest. Therefore, selection is the key to creating a meaningful study of a single year. I do not have a ready-made and satisfactory answer how to systematize the problem of selection, but I rather want to offer an open-ended array of incidents and events that I consider for various reasons to be important when dealing with 1967. This will take the shape of an associative list touching on a couple of significant trends and topics.

The event where most of the topics and trends just mentioned come together is Expo 67, the Canadian centennial exhibition at Montréal, one of the most successful world exhibitions with 50 million visitors.⁹ This event is much too broad to unpack here, so some key strands should suffice to point out its significance. Expo 67 harks back to the European avant-garde of the interwar period with a heavy influence of John Grierson via the National Film Board of Canada, but also with more direct biographical connection, such as Alexander Hammid, co-creator of the spectacular six-screen projection *We Are Young* (at the CPR Cominco Pavilion), who had been (under his birth-name *Hackenschmied*) a key figure of the Prague film avant-garde in the 1930s

and became an instigator of the American avant-garde when he worked with his wife Maya Deren on *Meshes of the Afternoon* (US 1943). It is also at Montréal that Andy Warhol's self-portraits were part of the official US presence in a geodesic dome designed by Buckminster Fuller. As Warhol himself remembers:

The American pavilion was Buckminster Fuller's big geodesic dome, with its aluminum shades catching the sun, and an Apollo space capsule and a long free-span escalator. Those were things like you'd expect to find at an international exposition. What was unusual was that the rest of the American show was almost completely Pop – it was called Creative America. I remember thinking as I looked around it that there weren't two separate societies in the United States anymore – one official and heavy and 'meaningful' and the other frivolous and Pop. [...] So this U.S. exhibit was like an official acknowledgment that people would rather see media celebrities than anything else... The old idea used to be that the intellectuals didn't know what was going on in the other society – popular culture... [But] everybody was part of the same culture now.¹⁰

This would be the astonishing thing of this moment – that pop culture had caught up with official highbrow culture (and vice versa), before it again took different directions in the 1970s. It was a moment of contact and overlap between different spheres and sectors.

Yet again, this convergence was not limited to North America. The Belgian small town of Knokke witnessed the festival and art exhibition *Exprmntl 4* from 16 December 1967 until 1 January 1968 which drew 3000 visitors, a considerable number given the experimental and spontaneous nature of the festival.¹¹ Visitors included Wim Wenders and Edgar Reitz, Harun Farocki and Holger Meins. In fact, *Exprmntl 4* was not a film festival in the conventional sense, but a multimedia spectacle with conferences, concerts and an art exhibition. Contrary to the legend that the origin of structural film is to be found at this occasion, possibly because Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967) had its European premiere here and won the main prize, the festival was a heterogeneous and hybrid collection of projections, performances and experiential spaces. Many film screenings took place not in the cinema, but in the foyer of the casino, punctuated by political and artistic interventions. Retrospectively, a major part of the experimental cinema of the 1970s has been summarized under the headline of structural film, characterized by a Greenbergian modernism, medium specificity, abstraction and formal autonomy, while in fact the event at Knokke (and the film culture of 1967 at large) is rather permeated by wide-ranging multiscreen experiments expressing a holistic spirituality and cosmic consciousness, as conceptualized in Gene Youngblood's seminal *Expanded Cinema* (1970).¹² This book, in turn, is prefaced by a text written by Buckminster Fuller, the guru-cum-architect famous for his geodesic domes who proved to be a key influence not only at the Black Mountain College and in Stan Vanderbeek's Moviedrome (at Stony Brook, Long Island),¹³ but also at various large-scale exhibitions such as Moscow 1959 and Montréal 1967 in the service of official government institutions. In recent years, the history of the televisual in relation to satellites has been researched and fleshed out, resulting in a fascinating story about how conceptions and ideas of the global have been developed and circulated through an interconnected media network. In the course of the 1960s, a series of satellites were launched and installed which created an intercontinental net of satellite links for live television. A landmark in this respect was the 1967 broadcast of the BBC-production *Our World*, a live intercontinental TV programme that reached five hundred million viewers in 24 countries. The programme deals with development and overpopulation in the form of a cross-section, so popular also from the multi-screen projections at Expo: "*Our World* combined the conventions of the film newsreel, the travelogue, and the television variety show. It was divided into five major segments that emphasized problems faced by, and excellence within, the global community."¹⁴ *Our World*, then, symbolizes the world turning into a global community or global village (a term coined five years earlier by Marshall McLuhan, himself a key influence on the events of 1967) through the advances of space travel, satellite high-tech and media technology, perhaps best epitomized in the Beatles performing their new sin-

gle *All You Need Is Love* as an exclusive premiere at *Our World* in front of half a billion people, simultaneously using and celebrating global presence and instantaneity, celebrity culture and media power.

Indeed, the most emblematic piece of popular culture to come out in 1967 was probably the Beatles' album *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Heart Club's Band* which was allegedly released hurriedly in advance, as illegal copies of the work had already found its way into circulation – even media piracy and informal distribution from below can already be found in this year. Another anecdotal trace that might lead to more substantial claims can be found in a letter that a young woman from Ohio wrote to Stanley Kubrick, praising his recently released film *2001: A Space Odyssey* as “the greatest movie I have ever seen in my life. In fact it's one of the greatest things that ever happened to me ranking with Expo 67 and (of course!) the Beatles.”¹⁵ What does a big budget Science-Fiction-blockbuster made by an American expat in Great-Britain have in common with a thematic exposition in French-speaking Canada and the Fab Four from Liverpool? I would argue that they are all animated by a utopian hope for a direct, unmediated and sensory experience that carries the promise for a better world, by the intersection of multimedia extravaganza and an esoteric belief in expanded consciousness through aesthetic experience.

Another case in point was the foundation of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1967. The key force behind this institution was György Kepes, a Hungarian-born visual artist who came to Berlin in the 1920s where he designed, among other things, the cover for the first edition of Rudolf Arnheim's *Film als Kunst*, before moving on to London where he became a close collaborator of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. He moved on with Moholy-Nagy to the US where he taught at the New Bauhaus in Chicago, as well as other art institutions. Among his students and collaborators were Saul Bass, Arnheim and Moholy-Nagy, but also Buckminster Fuller, Norbert Wiener, Marcel Breuer, Charles Eames,¹⁶ Walter Gropius and many more creative who worked in the transitional field between art, visual education and didactic propaganda. In 1967, he founded the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at the MIT where artists, social scientist and administrators collaborated on developing the future course of society, all in keeping with the avant-garde spirit of changing the world by artistic means. Counter-cultural ideas of transforming the world through art and happenings were able to seep into the mainstream, but also engineers, technicians, and creative personnel could still work side by side. The visual reconfiguration of the world, a process we are still witnessing today, can be traced to events and institutions such as this.

If we look at the art world, a retrospective perspective allows one to see the shock waves of 1968 already shaking the foundations the year before. Yet again, such a retrospective teleology is always problematic, as 1967 is also the year when Michael Fried's seminal essay *Art and Objecthood* was published which took minimalism to task and was in retrospect often understood as a watershed moment between the abstraction of minimalism in the 1960s and the more politicized art of the 1970s.¹⁷ Another historical genealogy has recently been suggested by Fred Turner who has, in a series of two books, pinpointed 1967 as the turning point of the postwar era. While the time from World War II until the late 1960s was informed by the shaping of public opinion through multi-media devices as developed in reaction to fascist and totalitarian attempt at controlling the public sphere, often engineered in conjunction with European *émigrés*,¹⁸ the period afterwards (from 1967/68 to the 1990s) belongs to the Californian Utopianism as it took shape in the computer culture of the Bay Area.¹⁹

4. What is problematic about such a project?

As I already hinted at, this proposal of studying a single year does not come without its inherent problems. First of all, a year is a rather arbitrary duration that does not correspond any more natural time-span of narrative sig-

nificance such as a life, an institution or an event with its pre- and post-history. At the same time, picking a year might be helpful in evading some of the perennial problems of historiography, which always pretends to describe the wholeness and totality of a certain object of study, whereas every selection is by necessity arbitrary. As the arbitrariness of the time-span might be productive because it forces one to confront the open-ended and contingent nature of reality, the choice of the specific year is highly motivated, as I have illustrated. This might lead the researcher to the well-known blindness, or rather: an increased awareness which results in spotting one's object everywhere, to seeing connections where there are none, or, in this case, finding significant events in 1967 over and over which are related to overarching themes and ideas.

One might also ponder what this turn towards a horizontal or synchronous analysis entails, as it rather stresses simultaneity, but shows a marked interest in synchronicity and non-synchronicity at the same time. Which events and developments take place at the same time, even though they might point in completely different directions; which seemingly out-of-synch happenings do have in fact some connection? These are different questions from traditional historiographic analysis, which I hope to address in my research. In a way, studying the *brève durée* might be seen as the flipside of the "*longue durée*" proposed by the Annales school of historiography.

5. What forerunners and potential models are there?

When I propose here to look at a single year in media history, I do not claim originality or novelty as there have been several noteworthy historiographical accounts before that similarly concentrate on one single year. Let me briefly consider and discuss some of these important and – at least for me – inspirational efforts. In his book *In 1926. Living at the Edge of Time* Stanford-professor Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht designs a hypertext-like web of 51 entries, which can be followed in any given order. According to Gumbrecht, "every sequence of reading should create the effect [...] to be in the year 1926."²⁰ The entries are meant to directly evoke the world of 1926 as a complicated and asynchronous set of events, not to analyse or theorise them in any specific way. Whether this semi-literary experiment is successful does not interest me here, instead I want to turn to the methodological postscript entitled "After learning from history." Gumbrecht takes the "*post-histoire*" as his point of departure, the idea that we can no longer meaningfully employ the past for the understanding of the present (which is ever expanding) and the future (which is progressively vanishing). Instead of lamenting the loss of historical accessibility, no longer believing in the capability of objectively reconstructing the past, Gumbrecht proposes a sensual rapprochement with historical times, trying "to create the illusion of a direct experience of the past,"²¹ carefully balancing out illusion with direct experience. According to Gumbrecht this results in a liberation not having to think any longer in the logic of break and rupture, of threshold year and symbolic events, but instead being able to evoke a certain mood and atmosphere, engaging with singular events and experiences, or, as he himself has called it "narrating the past as if it were your own time." This radical turn would, of course, release us from the stifling obligations of anniversaries and commemorative dates, of having to remember in order not to forget which turns historical knowledge into a catechisms of our own collective identities, yet again it would also mean to lose any sense of causality and agency as it relates to the historical process that we reconstruct. As much sympathy as I have for this approach, the price one has to pay, appears to be much too high to see it as more than an occasional experiment.

The massive French anthology (3 volumes, 1900 pages) on *L'Année 1913* has chosen a year that is much easier to pinpoint as significant, as the different chapters concentrate on the aesthetic forms of art on the eve of the First World War.²² This "horizontal study" (2) aims to reconstruct the artistic production and cultural climate of a specific year, focusing on novelty and the harbingers of the emerging modernist aesthetics: Arnold Schönberg and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Wassily Kandinsky, Walter Gropius and James Joyce. The cinema

is presented by Raymond Bellour who, under the title *Naissance du cinema* reflects back on the origins of the medium, discusses Griffith's seminal Biograph-production, but mainly provides a list of remarkable films, events and happenings in different countries in 1913. On the whole, the book follows a rather traditional model that takes a specific moment to talk about larger concerns and it concentrates almost exclusively on the traditional centers of European art and culture (Paris, Vienna, Berlin, London, Rome).

There are other examples one could turn to and that I do not have the time to go into here: Jean Starobinski's study of the interrelations between art and politics during the French revolution,²³ Jürgen Kuczynski's detailed account of everyday culture in the German Empire,²⁴ Thomas Harrison's cultural history of expressionism and beyond,²⁵ even Florian Illies' recent popular success of giving a private and anecdotal history of the year before the First World War, especially sketching out the personal and professional webs of the nascent avant-garde movement.²⁶ Especially the high tide of modernism and the avant-garde just before World War One seems to be a moment that has drawn specific attention, as can be seen in three studies focusing on the years 1910-1913.

Conclusion

Let me in closing then very briefly and rather playfully remark what a possible outcome of such a study might be. One could potentially conceptualise the results as the "three C's" of media history. *Convergence* not only implies media convergence, a term which has become so popular recently, but also convergences of discourses and ideas, of institutions and objects. How do certain thoughts and ideas become topical, "hot" or "viral" and then start being transferred from one context to another, is a question one can productively ask here. More concretely, how is this facilitated through publications and translations, personal contact and mediated communication. *Contingency*, the second C, requires an attention to how things could have been different, asks one to consider how things are not necessarily the way they have turned out to be. Again, this could mean the trajectory of a biography as much as the fate of an invention; this can be used to examine the decision-making processes of an institution or to look at the dissemination of a specific article (translations, reprints, lectures). And finally, *Coincidence and Chance* implies an attention to anecdote and the seemingly far-fetched, the marginal and the absurd. How do accidental meetings, chance encounters and random ideas gave rise to important things, how can little causes have big effects? The year 1967 which I will focus on in my research promises offers a particularly productive example for a different kind of media history to be written.

I do not propose this as a new model to be followed, but rather as a set of ideas which might give rise to many different, even competing and contradictory, ways of dealing with the past because the way we understand and conceptualise the past influences the way we shape the future. This is why we cannot stop rethinking and rewriting the past.

Notes

¹ Lisa Parks, *Cultures in Orbit. Satellites and the Televisual*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC 2005, p. 15.

² Fredric Jameson, *Cognitive Mapping*, in Cary Nelson, Larry Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, IL 1990, pp. 347-360.

³ Michael Werner, Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: *Histoire croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity," in *History and Theory*, no. 45, February 2006, pp. 30-50.

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- ⁴ See Wolfgang Ernst, *Der medienarchäologische Blick*, in Harro Segeberg (ed.), *Die Medien und ihre Technik. Theorien - Modelle - Geschichte*, Schüren, Marburg 2004, pp. 28-42.
- ⁵ Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho!*, John Calder, London 1983.
- ⁶ Pierre Berton, *1967, the Last Good Year*, Doubleday, Toronto 1997.
- ⁷ See Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, Basic Books, New York 1973; Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript of the Societies of Control," in *October*, vol. 59, Winter 1992, pp. 3-7; Luc Boltanski, Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Verso, London 2007.
- ⁸ See the catalogue Diedrich Diedrichsen, Anselm Franke (eds.), *The Whole Earth. Kalifornien und das Verschwinden des Außen*, Sternberg Press, Berlin 2013.
- ⁹ See for valuable overviews of Expo 67 Rhona Richman Kenneally, Johanne Sloan (eds.), *Expo 67. Not Just a Souvenir*, Toronto University Press, Toronto 2010 and Monika Kin Gagnon, Janine Marchessault (eds.), *Reimagining Cinema. Film at Expo 67*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal-Kingston 2014.
- ¹⁰ Andy Warhol, Pat Hackett, *Popism: The Warhol Sixties*, Harcourt Brace, New York 1980.
- ¹¹ For a reconstruction of the festival see Maxa Zoller, *Places of Projection. Re-contextualising the European Experimental Film Canon*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation Birkbeck College, London 2007, pp. 99-130.
- ¹² Gene Youngblood: *Expanded Cinema*, P. Dutton, New York 1970.
- ¹³ See Bill Arning, João Ribas (eds.), *Stan VanDerBeek: The Culture Intercom*, Contemporary Arts Museum/List Visual Arts Center, Houston, TX-Cambridge, MA 2011.
- ¹⁴ Lisa Parks, *Cultures in Orbit. Satellites and the Televisual*, cit., pp. 21-45, here 29.
- ¹⁵ Quoted in Peter Krämer, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Palgrave MacMillan, London 2010, p. 86.
- ¹⁶ According to Fred Turner, Eames was heavily influenced by Kepes; see Fred Turner, *The Democratic Surround. Multimedia & American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL-London 2013, p. 256.
- ¹⁷ Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Artforum*, no. 5, Summer 1967, pp. 12-23. For a productive re-reading of Fried's essay see Pamela Lee, *Chronophobia. On Time in the Art of the 1960s*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 2004, pp. 36-81.
- ¹⁸ Fred Turner, *The Democratic Surround. Multimedia & American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties*, cit.
- ¹⁹ Id., *From Counterculture to Cyberculture. Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL-London 2006.
- ²⁰ Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *In 1926. Living at the Edge of Time*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1997, p. 7.
- ²¹ *Idem*, p. 475.
- ²² Liliane Brion-Guerry, *L'Année 1913. Les forms esthétiques de l'oeuvre d'art à la veille de la première guerre mondiale*, Klincksieck, Paris 1971.
- ²³ Jean Starobinski, *1789. Les Emblèmes de la raison*, Flammarion, Paris 1973.
- ²⁴ Jürgen Kuczynski, *1903: Ein normales Jahr im imperialistischen Deutschland*, Pahl-Rugenstein, Köln 1988.
- ²⁵ Thomas Harrison, *1910: The Emancipation of Dissonance*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA 1996.
- ²⁶ Florian Illies, *1913. Der Sommer des Jahrhunderts*, S. Fischer, Frankfurt am Main 2013.

An Item Misplaced in Time. Trademarks and Other Symbolic Images of the Early Film Industry (1893-1914)

Trademarks, production logos and other symbolic images created to advertise and promote the newborn art of cinematography, not only express the expectations and visions of a film's producer, but also reflect the particular time period in which the logo was created. Chronological series of commercial logos are thus helpful for dating film and related documents.¹ Indeed, it is indisputable that the logo represents a valuable form of demarcation: "*Il y a avant tout une valeur démarcative*,"² as it is actually a dual demarcation – the logo identifies the film and also determines its beginning and end.

My research utilizes methods established by the classical tradition of examining the mechanisms and methods through which texts and images are transmitted.³ Although the analysis of corporate logos has a long tradition, there are currently no studies on recurrent iconographic motifs or their origin and history in the field of cinematography. And yet, "Even propaganda, a self-evident, transparent language, needs to be deciphered."⁴ This paper focuses on these forgotten *remnants* as new historiographic sources. According to Walter Benjamin, we attempt to make history by means of the residuals of history.

In ancient Greek, the term *symbolon* describes an object split into two halves that later enables two people to recognize each other. We are looking for something that is lacking, the second half of our *symbolon*. The search is certainly not easy but is profitable insofar as we do not restrict ourselves to cinema studies, but to expand our research to images that are "*silencieusement accumulées, dans les archives des arts qui le cinéma precedent*."⁵ In 1908, the critic and theoretical Ricciotto Canudo stated that the film combines physically and symbolically all great contemporary inventions. For Canudo, cinema is the greatest miracle and the essence of all inventions of the modern era:

*Tra le meraviglie dell'invenzione moderna il Cinematografo appare subito come la suprema. Esso le riassume tutte, in simbolo o in realtà. Noi abbiamo creato una nuova dea per l'Olimpo nostro, questa dea è la Velocità degna in tutto dell'adorazione che gli Antichi ebbero per la Forza, degna soprattutto della nostra più grande, più complessa, più fine sensibilità.*⁶

The above explanation describes and celebrates cinematography as a symbolic art. The modern Olympus no longer hosts the mighty and powerful Zeus, but rather a fast moving, female Goddess. Like all gods, she does not appear to people in her true shape, but in the form of her favorite servant, Cinematography, which captures world events with divine speed on the medium of the film strip. In his essay *Der sichtbare Mensch* (published 1924 in Vienna), Béla Balázs reiterated this idea in an even more general form: "*Das Entscheidende dabei für den Film ist, dass alle Dinge, ohne Ausnahme, notwendigerweise symbolisch sind.*"⁷

The juxtaposition of symbols and images from different artistic periods appears evident within the analysis of Alexander Nagel of a frame of the film *Le Voyage dans la lune* by Georges Méliès:

*Le Voyage dans la Lune is a mixture of science fiction and historical fantasy. The astronomers who design the rocket and then travel in it wear flowing robes, extravagantly long beards, and conical wizard hats, and, in the first scene, meet in a lofty, columned hall. Although vaguely Renaissance in style, this setting is actually meant to stand for "centuries ago." Later, however, we see a city dotted by chimneys billowing smoke, a common enough sight in the nineteenth century.*⁸

If we accept the definition of anachronism as: "a collision between that which has already been and the now,"⁹ then it is easy to interpret logos and other symbolic representations of cinematography as examples of this clash between past and present. These accumulated images are used to sell something current. Film logos as symbolic cinematographic representations can be asynchronous with their own era and often even anachronistic in their graphic structure. Graphic representation have a form of inertia, thus it seems quite natural that older representations find a point of entry into the modern representations of cinematography. The graphic designers hired for advertising film made use of the stock of images derived from the theatre tradition and combined them with emblems of the achievements of the modern era, such as team engines, telegraphs, and electricity. Forced to deal with a new phenomenon, people always interpret it within known parameters:

*Chi, ad esempio, chiama il cinematografo «teatro muto» si comporta come Marco Polo che, ricorda ancora Eco, vedendo un animale a lui sconosciuto (il rinoceronte) lo chiama "unicorno," salvo poi essere costretto a specificare che cosa lo differenzia da quanto il suo sapere prevede per l'oggetto "unicorno." Questo procedere per approssimazione per definire un fenomeno sconosciuto comporta alternativamente fasi di addizione e sottrazione. Come a dire: si nomina provvisoriamente il fenomeno nuovo con un nome vecchio (corrispondente al "ritaglio di contenuto" che ci è familiare) specificando poi quanto eccede (addizione) o quanto manca (sottrazione) rispetto al già noto.*¹⁰

The magicians of the advertising industry started with tradition in order to create a visual language for the newly-born film industry. They applied a shameless hybridization of the forms of representation that certainly evoked skepticism. The sensitive and thoughtful poet Guido Gozzano (1883-1916) wrote in his 1916 essay on the cinema:

*Incomincio così, perché mi balena nel ricordo la réclame di una Casa americana dove il gruppo tragico è parodiato con un'ironia tutta yankee, e il padre e i figli disperati sono assaliti, allacciati, soffocati non dai serpenti di Tenedo, ma dal modernissimo nastro fotogrammatico. Il gruppo ha un simbolo che sorpassa forse le intenzioni commerciali dell'onesto disegnatore, un simbolo che può rendere pensosi noi Latini, e farci meditare sul passato fulgidissimo, sul presente burrascoso, sul futuro enigmatico.*¹¹

Gozzano's comment provides useful reflections about the origin of trademarks. In the case of the cinematographic use of Laocoön, the old iconographic composition is not used to create a new artwork, but is instead captured and placed into a new semantic context.

The adaptation of ancient symbols for the logos of the film industry is not a banal "rediscovery of classical antiquity," and could not develop into merely a pale replica of ancient tradition. The symbols of the past are re-contextualized in the new cinematographic landscape.

Logos are the figurative adaptations of the long-term ideas and goals of producers and graphic artists. They originate from a prophetic, proto-cinematographic past and point to hopes for the future. Inform and content, they are optimistic and cannot be otherwise, since they were used to sell something new.

These symbols and drawings are not to be considered artwork, even though they are certainly not outside the realm of artistic production. According to the American art historian James Elkins, these types of images belong to the category of non-art images:

There is no good name for such images, which include graphs, charts, maps, geometric configurations, notations, plans, official documents, some money, bonds, seals and stamps, astronomical and astrological charts, technical and engineering drawings, scientific images of all sorts, schemata, and pictographic or ideographic elements in writing: in other words, the sum total of visual images that are not obviously either artworks or religious artefacts.¹²

The logo is an image, in which time becomes stratified, where the tensions of the past and the future become condensed. In addition, the logo – as a fixed image – always appears as an anachronism, in relation to the filmed images, which are always linked to contingent reality. The major discrepancy between these different layers of time becomes evident when the logos appear inserted within the scene.

The anachronism of cinema, as time based art, can be perceived exactly in the film logo. According to Walter Benjamin, these graphics can be understood as an example of the *afterlife* of images. The apparent flow of time that connects the past to the present and future emerges from the symbol itself, rather than from images captured on film. Gozzano's reflections that identify the modern use of Laocoön as a meeting point between the "marvellous past, the restless present and the mysterious future," is important to comprehend that film logos and film symbols incorporate multiple time periods.

Illustrations

36. *Laocoön and His Sons* in the silent era (*Die Lichtbild-Bühne*, no. 88, 31 December 1909, p. 909).

Notes

¹ Suzanne Richard, "Pathé, marchio di fabbrica," in *Segnocinema*, no. 23, May 1986, pp. 74-77; Id., "Pathé, marque de fabrique. Vers une nouvelle méthode pour la datation des copies anciennes," in 1895. *Revue de l'association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma*, no. 10, October 1991, pp. 13-27; Jacques Malthête, "Pour une véritable archéologie des premières bandes cinématographiques," in 1895, no. 24, June 1998, pp. 9-21.

² Ronald Levaco, Fred Glass, *Quia ego nominor leo*, in Raymond Bellour (ed.), *Le Cinéma américain. Analyses du films*, vol. 1, Flammarion, Paris 1980, pp. 12-29.

³ Monica Centanni, *L'originale assente. Introduzione allo studio della tradizione classica*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2005.

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⁴ Carlo Ginzburg, "Your Country Needs You: a Case Study in Political Iconography," in *History Workshop Journal*, no. 52, 2001, p. 7.

⁵ Maurizia Natali, *L'Image-paysage. Iconologie et cinéma*, Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, Saint-Denis 1996, p. 57.

⁶ Ricciotto Canudo, "Il trionfo del cinematografo," in *Il nuovo giornale*, Firenze, 25 November 1908, reprinted in Giovanni Dotoli, *Lo scrittore totale. Saggi su Ricciotto Canudo*, Fasano, Schena 1986, pp. 129-138; "Of all the wonders of modern technology, cinema is the highest. It unites these wonders at a concrete and symbolic level. We have created a new God for Olympus – that of speed – which now occupies the place previously occupied by power" (my translation).

⁷ Béla Balázs, *Der sichtbare Mensch*, Hanser, München 1982, p. 104: "The decisive point for film is that all things, without exception, are necessarily symbolic" (my translation).

⁸ Alexander Nagel, *Medieval modern. Art out of time*, Thames & Hudson, London 2012, p. 41.

⁹ Georges Didi-Hubermann, *La somiglianza per contatto. Archeologia, anacronismo e modernità dell'impronta*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2009, p. 38.

¹⁰ Antonio Costa, *Teorie del cinema dalle origini agli anni trenta: la prospettiva estetica*, in Gian Piero Brunetta (ed.), *Storia del cinema mondiale*, Einaudi, Torino 2001, p. 417: "Who likens cinema to 'silent theater,' behaves like Marco Polo, when he classified a rhino as a 'unicorn.' He was forced to compare his observation of an unknown animal to the known concept of a 'unicorn.' This method of approximation oscillates between additive and subtractive strategies" (my translation).

¹¹ Guido Gozzano, *Il nastro di celluloido e i serpenti di Laocoonte*, in Mauro Sarnelli, *La sceneggiatura di San Francesco ed altri scritti*, De Rubeis, Anzio 1996, p. 199: "I begin in this way, because I suddenly remembered the advertisements of an American company, in which the tragic display of 'Laocoön and His Sons' is satirized with typical American irony. Here the Father and Sons appear not to be strangled by sea serpents, but by a modern filmstrip. The symbolism of this representation probably goes beyond the intention of the illustrators. Such a symbol forces us to reflect about the marvelous past, the troubled present and the enigmatic future" (my translation).

¹² James Elkins, "Art History and Images That Are Not Art," in *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 77, no. 4, December 1995, pp. 553-571.

Film History and "Cartographic Anxiety"

This paper examines the cartographic paradigm in recent film historiography and criticism. In particular, it focuses on a concept that can also be useful in film studies: "cartographic anxiety."

This catchy expression has already been used with reference to cinema by Giuliana Bruno in her *Atlas of Emotions*, essentially to signify the typically modernist cartographic obsession, as interpreted by early cinema, in particular.¹ While Bruno's reasoning goes far beyond a discussion of this concept's exact meaning, it should be noted that "cartographic anxiety" originally meant something more specific and quite different. Indeed, the expression was coined by cultural geographer Derek Gregory as the title of a chapter in his 1994 book *Geographical Imaginations*.² In turn, "cartographic anxiety" follows the expression "Cartesian anxiety" introduced by American philosopher Richard Bernstein.³ Cartesian anxiety denotes an epistemological anxiety about the existence of something that the deep structures of Reason *are unable to illuminate*. Both Descartes and Kant described the powers of Reason using metaphors of space, exploration, travel and conquest, and for Gregory this characterization legitimates an explicitly cartographic formulation of a similar anxiety.⁴ Therefore, cartographic anxiety should not be equated with the modernist obsession of striving to fill all the blank spaces on the world map. Rather, it articulates an unsettling disorientation caused by the emergence of new difficulties regarding the geographical *representability* of the world, about the regimes of truth of geography and the effectiveness of its configurations of knowledge and power. Cartographic anxiety concerns the limits of a project of knowledge, the *limits of our ability to know and understand the world*.

Geography is not only about describing the surface of the earth, but it also, and above all, entails inferring (and even somehow determining) *the way the world functions* as a whole, from a socio-political, economical and informational standpoint, starting from the world map. What Gregory highlights is a widespread embarrassment that recent cartographic theory has often noted. It is a problem of representation: the dissolution and dematerialization of the geographical object that caused what Franco Farinelli calls the "crisis of cartographic reason." Post-industrialism, globalization and digitization, says Farinelli, have introduced a new invisibility into

the circulation of all the most valuable things today, forcing the world to withdraw into a space beyond representation – a space that indeed is even beyond the traditional logics of space.⁵ This phenomenon also underpins the difficulties of cognitive mapping discussed by Fredric Jameson: late capitalism and its "hidden social order" are too complex to be adequately described, and they take the form of an unimaginable, unmappable, decentred, infinite global network that "can never be perceived with the naked eye."⁶

If that is cartographic anxiety, how can the concept be projected onto cinema? There are at least two ways of doing so. First, we can study how cinema, a medium with an ancient cartographic vocation incorporating a strong mapping impulse, as Teresa Castro would say, deals with and comments on the crisis of cartographic reason – of *its* own cartographic reason – in the filmic texts themselves, especially in those particular enunciative configurations that Castro calls "cartographic shapes."⁷ That is, we can examine how contemporary films consider their own geographicity as a problem in a now-altered media system and how they view cartography itself as an exhausted paradigm of thought now unable to make sense of the world – which is something that we have tried to do elsewhere.⁸ But it is also possible to trace the symptoms of cinema's cartographic anxiety in film historiography and criticism, and we aim to do so in outline here.

To highlight some radical "visual problems" in contemporary film history, we need to consider film history as a "way of seeing," and even history itself as a sort of *dispositif* implying a particular gaze and a specific place for the observer. It is no coincidence that the founder of the Annales school, Marc Bloch, was said to have discovered the importance of the *long durée* from the vantage point of a plane while serving as an intelligence officer during World War One – a viewpoint that had to be completed by the one from the ground, from the trenches.⁹ Similarly, in his posthumous book on the theory of historiography, *History: The Last Things before the Last*, Siegfried Kracauer drew a parallel between history and cine-photographic media – indeed, he saw the work as a sort of addition to his *Theory of Film* (in that history entails scopic regimes and is also a spectacle). Kracauer, too, resorts more than once to an analogy between the historian's "point of view" and "visual field" and the elevated vantage point of aerial photography. Moreover, he, too, believes that the writing of history consists in a dialectic between "extreme long shots" and "close-ups" (his terms) over and within the historical scenario.¹⁰

This continuous merging and shifting between two scopic attitudes – from above and from below – recalls the integration of two techniques of visually representing the world that underpins the discipline of geography: the somewhat contradictory integration of planar projection and linear perspective, which constitutes what geographer John Pickles has called the "cartographic paradox."¹¹ Indeed, according to Christian Jacob, it is precisely a similar ability to zoom in and out at different scales that constitutes the cinematographicity of geography, in particular that of the atlas, "a device that can reconcile the desire for an overview and for detail [...], that leads from global vision to partial images."¹²

If history, as well as geography, is "cinematic," it is not surprising if film history sometimes seems to incorporate something of the medium's geographicity. In fact, as we have partially anticipated, we could consider two complementary aspects of the relationship between geography and cinema. First, cinema is geographical because of its realism and its ability to represent the (whole) world, since every film contributes to the great archive of the visible, to the cinematic description of the earth. Second, cinema is geographical because of the specific regional and national way in which it is produced and distributed; in other words, because it can be represented as if it were the world, in an atlas of sorts, by film history and criticism.¹³

A rhetorical and aesthetic correspondence, or osmosis, between *cartographic cinema* and *cartography of cinema* can also be traced in some recent approaches to the study of film history. We believe and shall try to demonstrate that these approaches show some reactionary traits if seen in light of the "crisis of cartographic reason." In other words, we believe that the cartographic paradigm in recent film history attempts to overcome a crisis of representation: it has a symptomatic and compensative quality in contemporary (film) culture.

Let us consider the "world cinema" approach advocated by Dudley Andrew, among others. It champions an all-encompassing overview of global cinema production and distribution, promoting the virtues of a *distant reading* similar to what Franco Moretti proposed for literary history – and which, indeed, Moretti also used in relation to cinema.¹⁴

This perspective can convey the interconnection between the elements – films, cultures and economies – and their relationships, shapes and patterns, which is also described in the form of graphs and maps. Andrew proposes an atlas of world cinema:

*This is the pedagogical promise of world cinema, a manner of treating foreign films systematically, transcending the vagaries of taste; taking the measure of "the foreign" in what is literally a freshly recognized global dimension. Such an approach examines overriding factors, then zeroes in on specific "cinema sites" – provides coordinates for navigating this world of world cinema.*¹⁵

It is easy to see the cinematographicity of Andrew's proposed atlas, in the sense in which Jacob considers every atlas "cinematic," in the ability that it offers to zoom in and out – on the world cinema map, in this case.

World cinema "methodology" in film history not only conveys a complex and ideologically ambiguous geographical rhetoric but also has an aesthetic aspect in the strictly visual sense of the expression. World cinema's cartographic and worldist aesthetics is iconographically encapsulated by the logo on the back cover and before the title page in the Tauris World Cinema Series books edited by Lúcia Nagib; it is in fact a world map. To be precise, it is the highly popular and controversial "egalitarian" projection by Arno Peters – incidentally, it may be of interest that Arno Peters earned a Ph.D. with a thesis on cinema and propaganda in 1945 in Berlin.

What is wrong with the "worldview," the "larger vision," the "all-encompassing vocation" of world cinema, as advocated by Andrew, Nagib and many others? Surely the global is a situated construction. However, we do not mean that it would bring a neocolonialist approach to the study of cinema, because its proponents are always very prudent and believe in a "polycentric" methodology. Our point is that we should consider the fundamental reason behind this approach's success: *cartographic anxiety*, we assert. In other words, the pervasive and unconfessed fear that the attempts to draw a complete map of world cinema today are doomed to failure. World cinema's cartographic preoccupation may call to mind the modernist project obsessively striving to cover and to enframe the whole world. Is there really a "nomadic" cinema that can defy attempts to map it? Not at all, says Andrew, noting that the recent availability of Nigerian videos previously considered "unmentionable, unviewable, unmappable" seems to contest such a claim. Nothing is unattainable to the scholar; nothing is condemned to be obscured by clouds forever. However, we can begin to suspect that this cartographic approach to the study of cinema history is trying to strategically *reimpose* an order on something that is slipping out of control.

It is interesting to read between the lines of another of Andrew's crucial comments: "Today, amidst digital confections tempting *filmmakers* and *audiences* to escape into the air of the virtual, world cinema brings us back to the earth, this earth on which many worlds are lived and perceived concurrently."¹⁶ We believe that the uncomfortable awareness of the virtualization of cinema and of the audiences – of both filmic texts and their distribution and reception – is exactly the *ghostly presence* lurking behind this approach.

This also explains the great emphasis that world cinema places on *realism*: a similar *nostalgia for geography*, for a cinema that maps and that can be mapped, can be explained by considering that digital production can pose – or be perceived as – a threat to cinema's *referentiality*. As an example among the many publications on "global neorealism," etc., Tiago de Luca's recent Tauris World Cinema Series book considers a new "realist tendency [that] has surfaced on the world cinema map" from Iran to Thailand, Mexico, Philippines, Hungary, Taiwan,

Argentina, China, Russia, USA, Portugal, Turkey and Spain that uses location shooting, non-professional actors, depth of field and long takes.¹⁷ Here again, the confusion between cartographic cinema and cartography of cinema is apparent. Despite "digital technology's ability to elicit manipulation and simulation," which can call into question the "previously straightforward relationship with the real," "cinematic realism is alive and well," says de Luca, and can be found in all corners of the globe. "It is revealing," he adds, "that this cinematic tendency has emerged at the very moment that digital technology has the potential to obliterate film's indexicality."¹⁸

Incidentally, we do not believe that it is important whether this is true: someone perceives it to be true, and that is enough for our discussion. However, in our opinion, the real problem that cinema has to face concerns not the indexicality of the image but, rather, the *indicability* of the world. The problem originates *from the world* – from the invisibility of the contemporary world system, as Jameson says – not from the image.

On closer inspection, the celebration of this "new global realist" tendency in de Luca's book seems linked to another aspect – the very one that we spotted in Andrew's revealing sentence quoted above: the *virtualization of the audiences*.

The emergence of sensory realism in world cinema would seem to respond not only to simulation processes but also to the profound changes which the video, and more recently the digital have introduced into film viewing habits, increasingly displaced onto the private sphere of home and the mobile screens of electronic devices.

According to de Luca, recent realist "world" cinema (a "slow" cinema that reacts to the contemporary "culture of excess" and "overstimulation" of "our globalized, mobile and digitized world") would need a "sealed-off auditorium," a gigantic screen, a surround sound system, silence, immobility and darkness. All those factors provide an "experiential dimension [that] is compromised in the abstracted sphere of home or on the mobile screens of portable devices."¹⁹

This aversion to the recent phenomenon of the *relocation* of cinema²⁰ and a similar insistence on the importance of film-theatre screening are compelling insofar as they also seem typical of another recent kind of film – or maybe cinema – historiography that adopts the cartographic paradigm. We are referring to the approach illustrated by the essays collected in the 2011 book *Explorations in New Cinema History* edited by Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers. The "emerging trend" in cinema history that the book celebrates goes beyond the study of filmic texts, preferring to focus on cinema attendance, circulation and consumption. It is both microhistorical and macrohistorical in its method – "each 'local history'," says Maltby, "contributes to a larger picture."²¹ That approach aims to "describe patterns," "rhythms" and "movements" of the social and cultural experience of cinema, relying heavily on databases, quantitative research, empirical data, spatial analysis, geovisualization and GIS. Charts, tables, plots and graphs – in a word: geography. The geographicity of this approach to cinema history study is even more explicit in the 2013 collection *Locating the Moving Image*.²²

However, what is mapped in these cases is essentially classical public moviegoing, because the film theatre is considered the only experiential context that had embodied some authentic civic and social values during the last century of cinema history.²³ The Sanborn Fire Insurance maps used in the "Going to the Show" project, in which Robert Allen is engaged, might enable us to see not only how big a theatre was and whether it had a balcony or stage, but also the social dimension of the moviegoing experience: "going to the movies was a part of the experience of the spaces of downtown social, cultural, commercial and consumer life." Hence, it is important to observe the proximity between movie theatres and the civic, social, religious and commercial buildings around them.²⁴

Among the contributors to *Explorations in New Cinema History*, Jeffrey Klenotic is one of the keenest cartography and geovisualization enthusiasts: "This exploration would require using the full range of panning, zoom-

ing, identification, searching, thematic mapping, hyperlinking and other GIS tools."²⁵ Interestingly, he also lists some features that digital cartography imported from cinema, in another cinematic cartography of cinema of sorts. Klenotic proposes to consider "cinema history as a history of spatial relations." His words reveal a firm belief in what has been called cartographic reason: the possibility to infer the correlation between phenomena and their deeper meanings from their mutual spatial relationships. When using a map to note the interdependence between cinemas and railways in New Hampshire in 1936, Klenotic is adopting a typical argument of cartographic reason, which deduces how the world works from what is materially visible: the railway track traditionally indicates (or had indicated) a corresponding social reality. Everything happens through space and is inscribed on the land, and is therefore readable, mappable. He says, "Almost everything that interests a historian – goods and services, capital and labor, ideas and innovations, fashions and epidemics – moves from one place to another."²⁶ So too the sociality of cinema and its economic dimension: GIS allows us to trace, to visualize, to map social, cultural and economic networks. And movie theatres represent the tangible materialization of these networks.

Klenotic's and Allen's work, with all its captivating geographical fascination, can be read symptomatically. Without the authors' saying so, their endeavor is deeply motivated by the crisis of cartographic reason, by the secret consciousness of a new impossibility of inferring the invisible from the visible. Not everything is mappable today; not everything is material and can be represented in tabular form, especially not the most valuable things, such as money and information – this is what contemporary theorists of geography such as Gunnar Olsson and Franco Farinelli insistently repeat. And capital and labour, as Jameson says, are also unrepresentable.

The strong desire to geographically *locate* film history originates, we believe, from an awkward feeling of impotence in the face of the disintegration of traditional filmic texts and the multiplication and decentralization of the sites where films are experienced. A similar unease becomes apparent when authors make occasional wry remarks, such as Allen's evocation of contemporary moviegoing from the perspective of a teenager, reluctant about wearing

*pants and shoes, traveling to some other place, paying nearly the equivalent of buying a DVD to see a film once in a dark room without wireless internet connectivity with strangers at a time determined by someone else's schedule, seated upright in chairs bolted to the floor, limited in the range of comestible accompaniments to criminally overpriced popcorn, candy and soft drinks, discouraged from talking, singing along, and walking around, unable to pause, replay or fast-forward, deprived of director's commentary track, and absent alternative endings, outtakes, deleted scenes, bloopers, interviews with actors, directors and screenwriter, and "the making of" featurette.*²⁷

In these words, and in general in this "new historical" approach, as in the chapter by de Luca discussed above, we see a nostalgia or a reactionary desire for a well-disciplined *dispositif*, an old-fashioned "authentic" *spectatorial geometry* often deemed irremediably lost today – although it probably never actually existed in these terms.

If the "sealed-off auditorium" is the materialization of film culture, then film culture is mappable. We believe that cartographic anxiety motivates this geographic approach – an anxiety about the *unmappability* of contemporary film distribution and reception, which rarely reaches a similar level of visibility. *Shadow Economies of Cinema* by Ramon Lobato deals with precisely this theme: although it does not refer to the recent debates in the geographical discipline, it is a book on the crisis of cartographic reason applied to mapping film distribution today.

Film-theatre screening, says Lobato, is no longer the epicentre of cinema culture. Films are often distributed elsewhere, in the messy digital ecology but also in street markets, bazaars and grocery stores. Its peculiar social

dimension, from handshake deals to digital piracy, is not easily mappable. Informal film distribution is "parallel" and "subterranean;" it bypasses traditional institutions, and defies conventional measurement. Informal media flows, he says, "fall through the cracks of the measurement system and are rendered invisible."²⁸ It is a problem of *knowability*: it is hard to find reliable data in order to monitor and measure the grey area of informal production and exchange, which is so important today, nor are box office data useful. "Informal distribution is usually *invisible* – or at least less visible than its formal counterparts – in the industrial indexes and data that constitute our empirical knowledge of media flows."²⁹

Lobato is saying that the "map of world cinema" today cannot but omit many things that lie beyond the limits of our traditional means of knowing about cinema culture. Straight-to-video films are not eligible for Oscar nomination, while online peer to peer services have no nerve centre and are difficult to control and shut down: film history discourse needs normalized objects, but the cultural extent of what escapes its interpretive grid is increasing. From this perspective any attempt to formalize the informal, although legitimate and excusable, is mere self-deception. Take, for example, the typical attempt (which Andrew thinks is desirable, as we have seen above) to "take the measure" of, or size up, the Nigerian video industry, making a nontheatrical film culture more manageable, obedient and amenable to the Western film scholar's exploring, cartographic skills, even though large parts of it are empirically invisible.

It is, again, an *optical* deficiency: informal distribution is "rendered invisible by the lens" of film analysis and film history, and would need us to recalibrate our research paradigms to include the "unmeasured," the "unregulated," the "extra-legal" – it would be a perspective "from below," as Lobato recommends, and not just "from above." Actually, Maltby also made the suggestion to "write cinema history from below;"³⁰ however, we believe that some of the essays in *Explorations in New Cinema History*, as we have seen, take quite the opposite approach. Indeed, a similar method relies on the revelatory qualities of the bird's eye view – that is, on the ability to infer something from a vantage point that is now probably *obsolete*. James Clifford has said, "There is no longer any place of overview (mountaintop) from which to map human ways of life, no Archimedian point from which to represent the world."³¹ Or, in Farinelli's terms, an observer on a hilltop looking down at the sunlit valley could once (e.g. in New Hampshire in the thirties) positively deduce the functional relationship between things – the city, the coal mine, the factory, the railway, the way the world functioned. Nowadays, though, from the same place, no observer could identify any material trace to judge the interdependence between the things they see, because "today, the power of sight reveals almost nothing about the inner mechanisms that regulate how the world's activities reproduce."³²

To conclude, we have tried to explain why we find "cartographic anxiety" to be secretly at work behind certain kinds of contemporary film historiography facing the complexity of the cinematic landscape today. History has always involved optics, which always makes history theoretical, even when it does not claim to be so or when deems itself "post-theoretical." Indeed, it is well known that 'theory' etymologically relates to a particular way of seeing, of "holding the world at a distance." Because of the opacity, the complexity and the obscurity of film culture (and indeed of the contemporary world as a whole), it is especially difficult today to shift from the view from above to the view from below. That is something that even Kracauer, in *History: The Last Things before the Last* considered ultimately impossible. Like geography, (film) history is a practice of discipline and naming, which puts names on a map, and it requires its objects to conform to a particular framework, while it cannot but exclude what is not isomorphic and cannot be adequately accommodated. The cartographic paradigm in recent film history's attempts to locate cinema culture, showing neutrality but hiding nostalgia, silently but symptomatically tells us about these difficulties in attempting to grasp the whole picture of the world in order to master it intellectually: it tells of its own (our own) scopic problems and cartographic limits, the limits of our imagination.

Notes

- ¹ See Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film*, Verso, New York 2002, pp. 106-109.
- ² See Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations*, Blackwell, Cambridge-Oxford 1994, pp. 70-205.
- ³ Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1983, p. 16.
- ⁴ See also Gunnar Olsson, "Towards a Critique of Cartographical Reason," in *Ethics, Place and Environment*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1998, pp. 145-155.
- ⁵ See Franco Farinelli, *Geografia. Un'introduzione ai modelli del mondo*, Einaudi, Torino 2003 and Id., *La crisi della ragione cartografica*, Einaudi, Torino 2009.
- ⁶ See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Verso, London-New York 1991, and Id., *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*, Indiana University Press-BFI, Bloomington-Indianapolis-London 1995.
- ⁷ "Formes cartographiques:" see Teresa Castro, *La Pensée cartographique des images. Cinéma et culture visuelle*, Aléas, Lyon 2011, p. 36. A related approach, more focused on diegetic maps, is that of Tom Conley, in *Cartographic Cinema*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis-London 2007.
- ⁸ My Ph.D. thesis, entitled *The Geographic Anxiety of Cinema. Persistence and Crisis of the Cartographic Reason in Contemporary Film* (supervisor: Prof. Ruggero Eugeni), is mainly about this topic.
- ⁹ See the paragraph "The Aerial View from the Annales School to Early Film Theory" in Paula Amad, *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète*, Columbia University Press, New York 2010, pp. 273-278.
- ¹⁰ See Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things before the Last*, Oxford University Press, New York 1969. On Kracauer's book, historiography and optics see Carlo Ginzburg, *Particolari, primi piani, microanalisi. In margine a un libro di Siegfried Kracauer*, in Id., *Il filo e le tracce. Vero falso finto*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2006, pp. 225-240, and also Id., *Microstoria: due o tre cose che so di lei*, in Idem, pp. 241-269.
- ¹¹ John Pickles, *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping, and the Geo-coded World*, Routledge, London-New York 2004, p. 89. The cartographic paradox has also been extensively discussed regarding the relations between film and cartography in Chris Lukinbeal, "Mobilizing the Cartographic Paradox: Tracing the Aspect of Cartography and Prospect of Cinema," in *Digital Thematic Education*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2010, pp. 1-32.
- ¹² Christian Jacob, *The Sovereign Map: Theoretical Approaches in Cartography throughout History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2006, p. 67.
- ¹³ The intermingling of these two aspects can be discerned even in *Kino und Erdkunde* by Hermann Häfker, Volksvereins-Verlag GmbH, M. Gladbach 1914, probably the first book on the subject: films are geographical because of their photographic basis, but they can provide the necessary view of the whole world (*Weltblick*) only when inserted in a global framework by the scholar. This amphiboly in the connection between cinema and geography is also evident in the two seminal series of articles edited by the British Film Academy's first director, Roger Manvell, published in *The Geographical Magazine* of the Royal Geographical Society from 1953. While the first series comprises several articles on national cinemas (i.e. cinema as the object of cartography), the second analyzes how documentary film has been used to describe the British Commonwealth territories and the United States (i.e. cinema as the subject of cartography, and the world as the object of cinematic cartography).
- ¹⁴ On the "distant reading" see Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary*

Film History and "Cartographic Anxiety"

History, Verso, London-New York 2005. With regard to cinema, see Id., "Planet Hollywood," in *New Left Review*, no. 9, 2001, pp. 90-101.

¹⁵ Dudley Andrew, "An Atlas of World Cinema," in *Framework*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2004, pp. 9-23, pp. 9-10.

¹⁶ *Idem*, p. 21 (emphasis added).

¹⁷ Tiago de Luca, *Realism of the Senses: A Tendency in Contemporary World Cinema*, in Lúcia Nagib, Chris Perriam, Rajinder Dudrah (eds.), *Theorizing World Cinema*, I.B. Tauris, London-New York 2012, pp. 183-205, p. 183. The article was followed by the book Id., *Realism of the Senses in World Cinema: The Experience of Physical Reality*, I.B. Tauris, London-New York 2014.

¹⁸ *Idem*, p. 15.

¹⁹ *Idem*, p. 16 and pp. 234-235.

²⁰ Francesco Casetti has written extensively on the "relocation" of cinema. For example, see Id., "Back to the Motherland: The Film Theatre in the Postmedia Age," in *Screen*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2011, pp. 1-12, and Id., "The Relocation of Cinema," in *Necus*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2012, pp. 5-34.

²¹ "With common data standards and protocols to ensure interoperability, comparative analysis across regional, national and continental boundaries becomes possible as each 'local history' contributes to a larger picture and a more complex understanding of [...] 'the infrastructure of cultural life'." Richard Maltby, *New Cinema Histories*, in Id., Daniel Biltereyst, Philippe Meers (eds.), *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, Wiley-Blackwell, Malden 2011, pp. 3-39.

²² Julia Hallam, Les Roberts (eds.), *Locating the Moving Image: New Approaches to Film and Place*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington-Indianapolis 2014.

²³ See, for example, the first paragraph (and note 1) of Robert Allen, *Reimagining the History of the Experience of Cinema in a Post-Moviegoing Age*, in Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst, Philippe Meers (eds.), *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, cit., pp. 41-57. See also Id., *Getting to "Going to the Show"*, in Julia Hallam, Les Roberts (eds.), *Locating the Moving Image: New Approaches to Film and Place*, cit., pp. 31-43.

²⁴ Richard Maltby, *New Cinema Histories*, cit. p. 31. See Robert Allen, *Reimagining the History of the Experience of Cinema in a Post-Moviegoing Age*, cit.

²⁵ Jeffrey Klenotic, *Putting Cinema History on the Map: Using GIS to Explore the Spatiality of Cinema*, in Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst, Philippe Meers (eds.), *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, cit., pp. 58-84, p. 75.

²⁶ *Idem*, p. 63.

²⁷ Robert Allen, *Reimagining the History of the Experience of Cinema in a Post-Moviegoing Age*, cit., pp. 43-44. The conscience of an "epochal divide" in the history of moviegoing pervades both the articles by Allen that we have quoted.

²⁸ Ramon Lobato, *Shadow Economies of Cinema: Mapping Informal Film Distribution*, BFI-Palgrave Macmillan, London 2012, p. 13. The quoted sentence refers to "films like *Left Behind*," but can be extended to the whole subject of Lobato's book.

²⁹ *Idem*, p. 44.

³⁰ Richard Maltby, "On the Prospect of Writing Cinema History from Below," in *Tijdschrift Voor Mediageschiedenis*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2006, pp. 74-96.

³¹ James Clifford, *Introduction: Partial Truths*, in J. Clifford, George E. Marcus (eds.), *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1986, pp. 1-26, p. 22.

³² Franco Farinelli, *Geografia. Un'introduzione ai modelli del mondo*, cit., pp. 52-53 (my translation).

Notes on Eadweard Muybridge's *Chickens; Scared by Torpedo, Plate 781 of Animal Locomotion* (1887)

Chickens; scared by torpedo is the final plate or "sheet" of Eadweard Muybridge's 1887 multi-volume chronophotographic portfolio, *Animal Locomotion*.¹ This plate – the 781st in the series – is visually, at once, compelling and perplexing, orderly and disorderly (figg. 37-41). We can perceive comical, absurd, excessive and destructive qualities mirrored in its form and content, its materiality and its concept. This plate's photographs and title appear, at face value, inexplicable, even redundant. To understand me, the plate seems to insist, you must look to the (depictive and verbal) rationale underpinning *Animal Locomotion* as a whole. This essay presents a preliminary indication of the discursive complexities surrounding *Chickens; scared by torpedo* and argues that the plate is a key to approaching *Animal Locomotion* as a work caught, not so much between *art* and *science*, as between *knowledge* and *value*. A key piece of historical evidence is identified that indicates that the plate is neither inexplicable nor redundant, but nevertheless continues to exceed *Animal Locomotion*. To begin, a few remarks on the critical perspective and methodology taken here. Firstly, Muybridge's chronophotographic work is taken to exert a pressure on film/cinema history precisely *at their borders* on the basis that the work stands as a widely-publicised proto-cinematographic contribution to the founding explication of what has come to be recognised as the cinematographic *dispositif*, that is, the discursive-structural-technical logic of cinematography.² Muybridge's animated loops, published for use in such devices as Reynaud's Praxinoscope or projected as part of his lectures, demonstrated the cinematographic principle directly. Muybridge's chronophotographic plates provided a different function. Owing to their cabinet card-/page-based layout, and, ultimately, the sheer scale of *Animal Locomotion*, they helped sensitise audiences to cinematography's frame- or photogramme-based system, predicated on the proliferation of unprecedented numbers of individual pictures grouped in equally unprecedented spatial and temporal intensity. In line with the conference aims, *Plate 781, Chickens; scared by torpedo* is taken as a "microhistorical"³ means to open up, rather than lock down conceptions of the border of film/cinema history; to dwell on details to reflect on wider concerns; to impede historiographic narrativity; to look, instead, towards discursive forma-

tions; and to draw on historical material that raises questions and invites speculation, rather than only supporting hypotheses. An archaeology of specific discursive formations found in work predicated on the production of (photographic) data, this essay opts to follow the lead of Michel Foucault. There will be no "writing a history of the referent"⁴ (or proto-"pro-filmic" events). In other words, we seek, through "the analysis of [discursive and systemic] formations [...] not the bubbling source of life itself, life in an as yet uncaptured state [...] [but, rather,] an immense density of systematicities, a tight group of multiple relations."⁵ One point of divergence with Foucault concerns the scale and approach towards the comparative study of widely dispersed discourses. As noted, this essay presents a microhistory. This is not to reject the comparative dimension, but to show how "a tight group of multiple relations" intersect in and around a specific case study. This is in line with Foucault's approach to Velázquez's 1656 painting *Las Meninas* as a "representation [...] of Classical representation"⁶ in which this dispersed discourse is "simultaneously grouping together and spreading out before us."⁷ *Chickens; scared by torpedo* embodies this in multiple ways, from its photographic content, to its layout, to its place in the ensemble, *Animal Locomotion*, and beyond. If, as Foucault states, "archaeology [...] takes as the object of its description what is usually regarded as an obstacle,"⁸ Plate 781 is a fitting candidate. Marta Braun considers "*Animal Locomotion* [...] the point where the discourses of art and science unite to produce what we might call cinema."⁹ The present essay suggests an alternative, complimentary model that utilises *knowledge* and *value* in place of *art* and *science* so as to approach the richness of *Animal Locomotion* from a different angle and engage with the challenges of comprehending plates such as *Chickens; scared by torpedo*. Understanding *Animal Locomotion* as a juxtaposition and intersection of "the discourses of art and science" is important and may be traced directly back to the project's origins.¹⁰ However, it does carry limitations (and, perhaps, contradictions) principally in assuming a clear division between the fields of art and science, which the work in question collapses. Approaching *Chickens; scared by torpedo* and *Animal Locomotion* in terms of *knowledge* and *value* follows Roland Barthes's analysis of Georges Bataille's "scientific" writing, exemplified by his 1929 *Documents* essay "The Big Toe," in which Barthes identifies an "alternation of knowledge and value, rest from one in the other, according to a kind of *amorous rhythm*."¹¹ This is not a "polemical" opposition, but a "structural" one.¹² Barthes sees Bataille fragmenting – but not destroying – knowledge, or rather its "codes," to make space for "outburst[s] of value."¹³ In fact, Barthes presents knowledge and value as two kinds of knowledge: one official ("endoxal"), "citational, referential, reverential," the other "remoter," almost poetic, focussed on the "strange" and on the "detail."¹⁴ Through this "eccentric,"¹⁵ "capricious, cunning [...]" (discursive) play of knowledge,¹⁶ "a whole fabric of value, [...] [a] 'verbal display'"¹⁷ that "rules the entire discourse"¹⁸ becomes visible. In this way, we have a text that "exceeds knowledge by value."¹⁹ Oscillations between knowledge and value can be found at all levels and the interrelations we find between and across them can be complex. With its emphasis on the "detail," the "miniaturisation" of knowledge²⁰ (at the value end), Barthes/Bataille's model aids microhistorical attention to discursive formations by providing a means to scale the critic's framework to their chosen case study.

Muybridge's work has received significant attention since its inception. Muybridge is credited and critiqued – in equal measure – for his technological, artistic, scientific and commercial achievements. His importance to the histories of photography and cinematography is agreed, however, the terms of this status are contested. *Animal Locomotion* is often considered Muybridge's magnum opus; an epic work. Stephen Barber describes it as "profligately vast and expansive, wilfully so."²¹ Endless reference is made to the 20,000 odd photographs used. Noted with equal frequency, often in the same sentence or paragraph, is the total number of plates – 781. In discursive terms, *Animal Locomotion*'s significance is founded, in part, on numeric value (its scale and the implied expense of labour) irrespective of content or method. To speak about *Animal Locomotion*, then, is to accept these terms. As noted, this appeal to scale has contributed to public understanding of cinematography's

frame structure. The repeated references to *Animal Locomotion*'s 781 plates are important here: they may be taken as (admittedly indirect) signposts to Plate 781, *Chickens; scared by torpedo*. In this sense, *Chickens; scared by torpedo* can be approached as a metonymic index of *Animal Locomotion*'s 781 plates, as well as its closing statement. Doing so provides us with a valuable opportunity to access deeper discursive structures. While we do not seek to reveal any secret truth to *Animal Locomotion*, or rather, it is irrelevant whether Muybridge and his team considered *Chickens; scared by torpedo* as a metonymic index of the whole work, we equally cannot doubt that this plate was consciously chosen to be last.

It is important to remember here that *Animal Locomotion* was not originally a book; but a set of eight portfolios containing loose plates divided into eleven volumes.²² This portfolio structure offers an intersection of a linear order (the numbering of plates) with a non-linear system (the potentially variable sequences of plates). *Chickens; scared by torpedo* could thus – potentially – appear at any point in the study of *Animal Locomotion*. Plate 781 is *Animal Locomotion*'s closing statement solely in terms of numeric sequence. Within *Animal Locomotion*'s non-linear system the terminal force of this metonymic index of all plates could intervene at any given point.

Chickens; scared by torpedo has attracted some attention from scholars (often being slightly mistitled). In 1968, Aaron Scharf described the plate as “an experiment using explosive force to set off a clockwork motor and simultaneously [...] provoke the nervous reaction of the subject.”²³ To give Muybridge's project its due, instead of a clockwork motor, we are dealing with early electrical circuitry. The relationship between the explosion and the motor seems also to have been different. Performing a sleight of hand with Scharf's assessment, Virgilio Tosi emphasises “detonation” as the initiating factor, marking *Chickens; scared by torpedo* the result of “a very modern experiment, both in terms of its starting point and its methodology.”²⁴ These assessments argue for the plate's purpose, innovation and *value* by stressing only its technical dimensions. Sidelining these dimensions, other critics have emphasised the plate's conceptual (in)significance. After reaching Plate 781, Braun notes,

*The scientific “logic” [of Animal Locomotion] [...] follows a covert sociological hierarchy, from the movements of the highest subject “the nude male” [through women, children and the crippled] to the lowest, animals. It also moves from the more visually intelligible to the more obscure: the most difficult pictures, in which the movement is hardest to determine, are placed towards the end of each volume, where they are less noticeable.*²⁵

In Braun's two intersecting grading scales, *Chickens; scared by torpedo* would not just be last, but lowest of the low. Astute and attractive as this observation is in its broad strokes, it does overlook the original portfolio structure of *Animal Locomotion* which effectively neutralises any possibility of making certain plates “less noticeable.” Equally debatable is the degree to which the “sociological hierarchy” presented is “covert.” After all, Muybridge's *Prospectus and Catalogue of Plates for Animal Locomotion* plainly lists the titles of all plates. Applying the opposition of visually intelligible and visually obscure, Braun explicitly places *Chickens; scared by torpedo* in the latter category. Looking at the plate we can certainly recognise obscurity, but we must also concede that this obscurity is presented with clarity; that the disorder of the “scene” is housed in an orderly layout. I will return to this later.

For Phillip Prodger, *Chickens; scared by torpedo*, alongside certain other plates, indicates that “the occasional craziness of life [was] allowed to assert itself” within *Animal Locomotion*.²⁶ For Prodger, *Chickens; scared by torpedo* specifically suggests that “having turned his attention to the reactions of poultry to projectiles, Muybridge had at last exhausted his prodigious list of motion study experiments.”²⁷ In casting the “reactions of poultry to projectiles” as a low topic of inherently minimal interest, Prodger uncritically buys into the “sociological hierarchy” identified by Braun, rendering the plate, as it were, *the straw that broke the camel's back*.

Prodger also provides no evidence that *Chickens; scared by torpedo* was the last plate to be photographed, despite this being essential to his argument. While this is not out of the question, it is worth noting – in the absence of more precise information – that, based on her consultation of Muybridge's notebooks and proof prints, Braun finds that “the published plates are numbered and ordered in a sequence that is not related to the chronological order in which they were made.”²⁸ All this raises the question of what discursive significance the recorded shooting sequence of *Animal Locomotion* is perceived to carry in relation to the published outcome. Prodger seems to be arguing either that the work is a document of a linear developmental process in which Muybridge and his team reflected on their work step by step (through their “turning of attention” and “exhausting” of possibilities) or that the whole project was defined in advance (Muybridge's “prodigious list”). The underlying view is that the publication mirrors the shooting schedule which in turn mirrors an initial plan; not, we must note, with the aim of improvement (as implied by Scharf and Tosi), but rather to “exhaust” the project's potential, to chart its decline (ending in *Plate 781*). Braun, meanwhile, underlines the evidence that the published work has been hugely edited, to posit, in keeping with her wider arguments, that *Animal Locomotion* harbours a disjuncture between (broadly speaking) stated intent and outcome. As we have seen, Braun also sees the project presenting decline; a double decline in “sociological hierarchy” and “visual intelligibility.”

Considered side by side, the above accounts are all uneven. Scharf and Tosi strip *Chickens; scared by torpedo* of its unusual visual and conceptual appeal. Braun and Prodger overlook the importance of technology in understanding the plate. All suffer from hurriedly utilising *Chickens; scared by torpedo* to support a larger argument. If *Chickens; scared by torpedo* is worthy of mention at all, surely it deserves an assessment that embraces and exceeds the full scope of these critical responses?

To this end, I believe we can be more assertive about the conditions underpinning the use of explosives in *Chickens; scared by torpedo*. If we look at Muybridge's patent for a “Method of and Apparatus for Photographing Changing or Moving Objects,” dated 19 June 1883, just prior to the University of Pennsylvania's decision to sponsor what would become *Animal Locomotion*, we find explicit reference to photographing “a changing object, such as an exploding torpedo, or blasting rock in its different phases.”²⁹ A few lines on, Muybridge goes into more detail:

*To photograph a changing body – such as an exploding torpedo or blasting rock – the electric current which fires the charge may effect [sic] the release of the stop of the motor to cause the latter to operate; but in such case the circuit-closing cylinder will preferably be so constructed as to make one or two rotations before operating on any of the terminals, so as to give time for the fuses which are ignited by the electric current to transmit fire to the explosive charge before the shutter of any camera is operated.*³⁰

The clear intention here is that both explosive and cameras are triggered simultaneously. Given the mechanical operating systems used for *Animal Locomotion* (in particular the electrically operated cameras), it is reasonable to assume that *Chickens; scared by torpedo* tests this dual-triggering; albeit missing the beginning and resolution of both the explosion and the dispersal of the chickens. Above all, the patent clearly shows that photographing torpedoes exploding had entered Muybridge's thoughts prior to starting work on *Animal Locomotion*. The circumstance we glimpse thus supports Scharf's and Tosi's assessments, and runs at odds with Prodger's and Braun's: *Chickens; scared by torpedo* demonstrates a patented, rationalised technique that makes (small) overtures to industrialist and military activity. It does not signal a project exhausted, but rather, suggests a different avenue of enquiry altogether, a future project (ultimately unrealised). Thus, *Chickens; scared by torpedo* contains a socially significant element – the torpedo – that will always exceed the remit of “*Animal Locomotion*.”

Excessive as this element might be, it does feed back into *Animal Locomotion* by raising the question of the other non-physiological components found in other plates; which in turn raises the question as to whether "animal locomotion" can ever be abstracted from non-physiological components, i.e. the world, its materiality, its surfaces (including its photo-sensitive surfaces), its adornments. Indeed, approached in this way, *Animal Locomotion* teems with non-physiological factors. Here, it seems apt to introduce *Plate 714, Dog; aroused by a torpedo*, the only other plate in *Animal Locomotion* to reference torpedoes. Here, the torpedo is largely absent – a number of the photographs contain specks that would seem to be falling shrapnel, but no explosion is visible.

Placing the 1883 patent's verbalised intent beside *Plate 781's* depicted demonstration underlines an important discursive ambiguity over the definition of "torpedo." Muybridge's patent suggests some kind of large or powerful, certainly *functional* charge. The explosion we see in the photographs is rather smaller and less significant, less *valuable*, by comparison, and correlates better with two American usages of torpedo recorded in the *Collins English Dictionary* as follows: "a firework containing gravel and a percussion cap that explodes when dashed against a hard surface" and "a detonator placed on a railway line as a danger signal." A novelty of Muybridge's torpedo is the use of remote detonation, discussed above. Perhaps here we glimpse a named form of torpedo that has fallen into almost total obscurity? What seems clear is that Muybridge is making a direct reference to his patent. Beyond the ambiguity of what constitutes a torpedo, what emerges between the patented intent and *Chickens; scared by torpedo* is a disjuncture of scale and value: we read about industrial or military explosions and are shown almost harmless fireworks. Moving from patent to chronophotographic plate, value is, as Barthes puts it, "miniaturised." Moving from chronophotographic plate to patent, value is amplified. Either way, knowledge is underlined.

In Muybridge's favour, the torpedo serves its purpose admirably. Indeed the only discernable fault in the "demonstration" of this networked *electro-photo-pyrotechnic* apparatus is that, as the patent specifies, the cameras could have been better synchronised with the explosive. Nevertheless, *Chickens; scared by torpedo* presents two fluent series of photographs in a neat, orderly layout. Unlike the 40% of *Animal Locomotion* plates that Braun has calculated do not present "consecutive phases" of movement, but, rather, collaged sequences containing gaps, repeated photographs, and photographs from other shoots,³¹ *Chickens; scared by torpedo* contains no noticeable errors, gaps or substitutions;³² each camera shutter and photographic plate seems to have functioned as intended. In this way, the plate provides evidence of the effectiveness and precision of Muybridge's system as outlined in his patent. And yet this plate is one of less than a hundred for which "No record of intervals of time between phases"³³ exists. Considered in connection with the 1883 patent, this seemingly casual approach has the effect of playing down the knowledge embedded in *Plate 781*.

What of the chickens? Visually (photographically), their shapes in some of the frames approach formlessness (fig. 40). The "torpedo" smoke further obscures their "animal" appearance (fig. 41). Above all, they are not paid the same attention as the other animals in the collection; they are not given precedence and held tightly in view, instead they are dwarfed by the smoke and somewhat lost in the *mise-en-scène*. In his near contemporaneous record of the animals used in *Animal Locomotion*, Edwin A. Kelley lists the chickens as "Gallus bankiva, Temm., var. Domesticus."³⁴ Choosing a domestic – that is, unexceptional – breed to be "scared by torpedo" is hardly surprising to us (the dog in *Plate 714* seems to be at a safer distance from its torpedo). And yet, the widely known practice of cockfighting suggests a sort of bloody nobility for the chicken. Indeed, there is evidence that this brutal heritage defined the chicken's initial domestication in archaic Asian societies and beyond, including Celtic Britain.³⁵ These animals were not food, they were prized, if expendable possessions, intimately caught up in complex social and economic structures. They were, then, excessive animals for humanity, linked to recreation (gambling), not survival. By the late 19th century in America and Europe, while cock-

fighting endured, the chicken's social status had declined. In his 1910 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry for "Fowl," Alfred Newton, despite specifying "the genus Gallus," nevertheless speaks of "the otherwise nameless species which struts on our dunghills, gathers round our barndoor or stocks our poultry yards."³⁶ Nameless and formless, the chickens of *Plate 781* reveal the mutability of values; we can imagine an alternative scenario where chronophotographic scrutiny of the kick of a prize cockerel would be more valuable than the gait of a horse. From the perspective of value – that is, in a rest from knowledge, as well as art and science – there is power here. The chickens are not described as "flying" or "running," they are "scared." This is an emotional adjective, a blatant example of what Barthes calls a "value word." *Animal Locomotion* contains only a select number of named *value movements* – judgement on the human movements suspended – (the "aroused" dog in *Plate 714* probably does not count). More than simply pointing away from (scientific) knowledge in themselves, these plates, above all *Chickens; scared by torpedo*, perhaps reflect and certainly introduce *value* at the level of the "locomotion." This suggests an implicit, unverballed emotional value to the human actions. The emotional adjective "scared" is also what connects the chickens with the torpedo both causally and compositionally. With their low social status, the chickens become the principle elected custodians of contact with the torpedo,³⁷ and with it the move away from *Animal Locomotion* suggested by the 1883 patent.

Approaching *Animal Locomotion* in terms of *value* and *knowledge* is, I argue, at once an opportunity afforded by historical and critical distance and a dimension embedded in its conceptual foundations and initial reception. In 1893, Robert de la Sizeranne observed,

*Leafing through the pages of M. Muybridge's albums we gradually penetrate the mystery of scenes that, in nature, unroll too quickly for our eyes to comprehend. Consequently, these pages present diverse and contradictory impressions: some movements trace exquisite curves, while other postures reach grotesqueness.*³⁸

Sizeranne's remarks – which chime with 20th century assessments of photography's capabilities, most notably, notions of an "optical unconscious"³⁹ – clearly gesture towards an understanding of *Animal Locomotion* in which *value* and *knowledge* are fundamental. In 1888, in a similar vein, an anonymous reviewer for *The Art Amateur* noted,

*While the work was yet in progress interest was excited in various quarters by the unexpected grotesqueness of some of the forms thus caught after the beginning and before the accomplishment of an action. [...] The motions of the wings of birds in flight looked "queer" to artists who had made a special study of this branch of animal painting. [...] By far the greater number of these photographs are beautiful objects in themselves. The grotesque attitudes spoken of above are not many.*⁴⁰

Here, as in Sizeranne, the beautiful and the grotesque (indicators of *value*) are recognised as deeply embedded in the work. We might speculate, then, that *art* and *science* constituted the named fields between which *Animal Locomotion* appeared, while *knowledge* and *value* functioned as key forces in its discursive framework.

In accessing *Animal Locomotion*'s underlying discursive structure we move beyond an account that sees the work positing a system from which it departs and where its visual and verbal components vie for dominance. Instead, its irregularities, contradictions, idiosyncrasies and excesses become part of the whole.

Within *Animal Locomotion*, *Chickens; scared by torpedo* occupies a position both marginal and privileged. In relation to the work's dominant concerns and themes – the humans, the horses and so on – *Plate 781* will always be a minor case study. But this is very much part of its appeal and power. Another assessment of Bataille's methodology, from Philippe Sollers, encapsulates this situation well:

*The most insignificant anecdote, in the system of the non-system, brings in the infinitesimal mark of the instant, that is, the non-dissolution, total or abstract, of the non-system in the system. [...] [Within the system] there is always [...] a concrete detail which seems useless, which seems to be there to prove that, at a certain point, the system founders, collapses, has a lack hollowed out in it, a hole. A hole which imprints a non-seriousness in the system.*⁴¹

A question arises: does *Animal Locomotion* present a (non-)system? Braun's assessments regarding the irregularities of many of the plates certainly give grounds to think of it as containing both system and non-system. As one plate among so many, *Chickens; scared by torpedo* may always remain an "insignificant anecdote," a "useless concrete detail," but as Plate 781 of 781 it carries enough charge to "scare" *Animal Locomotion* a little. I offer a quotation and illustration (fig. 42) from *Strand Magazine*, 1891 as a coda that reconnects the foregoing discussion with wider currents around the spectacle of animal locomotion and points to the underlying value that the conjunction of chickens and fireworks had in the period in question:

*Perhaps the greatest curiosity of recent years in the way of firework displays, has been centred round the living fireworks. The "fighting cocks" greatly amused the Shah when he [visited Britain]. [...] Two men clothed with an "asbestos" suit, and entirely protected from danger, who have fastened to one side of them a framework of fireworks, depicting a [chicken] in fighting attitude. [...] [They] do it in a very life-like manner.*⁴²

Illustrations

37-41. Eadweard Muybridge, *Animal Locomotion*, Plate 781, *Chickens; scared by torpedo* (1887) (details).

42. Hare, *Living Fireworks Cockfighters* from "Fireworks," *Strand Magazine*, vol. II, July-December 1891, p. 473.

Notes

¹ Eadweard Muybridge, *Animal Locomotion: An Electro-Photographic Investigation of Consecutive Phases of Animal Movements, Prospectus and Catalogue of Plates, 1872-1885*, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 1887.

² For recent work on this see François Albera, Maria Tortajada (eds.), *Cinema Beyond Film: Media Epistemologies in the Modern Era*, Amsterdam University Press 2010.

³ See, for example, Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It," in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 20, no. 1, Autumn 1993, pp. 10-35.

⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Tavistock, London 1974, p. 47.

⁵ *Idem*, p. 76.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Routledge, London 2002, p. 17.

⁷ *Idem*, p. 18.

Notes on Eadweard Muybridge's Chickens; Scared by Torpedo

⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, cit., p. 171.

⁹ Marta Braun, *Fragmentation as Narration: The Case of Animal Locomotion*, in François Albera, Marta Braun, André Gaudreault (eds.), *Arrêt sur image, fragmentation du temps/Stop Motion, Fragmentation of Time*, Payot, Lausanne 2002, p. 168.

¹⁰ See Eadweard Muybridge, *Animal Locomotion: An Electro-Photographic Investigation of Consecutive Phases of Animal Movements*, cit., p. 3.

¹¹ Roland Barthes, *Outcomes of the Text*, in Id., *The Rustle of Language*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1986, p. 243.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ *Idem*, p. 242.

¹⁴ *Idem*, p. 240.

¹⁵ *Idem*, p. 246.

¹⁶ *Idem*, p. 242.

¹⁷ *Idem*, p. 248.

¹⁸ *Idem*, p. 245.

¹⁹ *Idem*, p. 239.

²⁰ *Idem*, p. 240.

²¹ Stephen Barber, *Muybridge: The Eye in Motion*, Elektron Ebooks, n.p. 2013, p. 5.

²² *Animal Locomotion* customers, or subscribers, as they were called, were initially invited to select 100 plates from the total collection for the price of \$100. Muybridge idiosyncratically referred to these potentially idiosyncratic sets as "copies" of *Animal Locomotion*. Buyers of six such "copies" (i.e. 600 plates) would automatically receive all 781 plates. See Eadweard Muybridge, *Animal Locomotion: An Electro-Photographic Investigation of Consecutive Phases of Animal Movements*, cit.

²³ Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography*, Allen Lane, London 1968, p. 169.

²⁴ Virgilio Tosi, *Cinema Before Cinema: The Origins of Scientific Cinematography*, British Universities Film and Video Council, London 2005, p. 71.

²⁵ Marta Braun, *Eadweard Muybridge*, Reaktion Books, London 2012, p. 187. The reference in parenthesis to "women, children and the crippled" is taken from a largely identical passage in Braun's *Fragmentation as Narration: The Case of Animal Locomotion*, cit. p. 167.

²⁶ Phillip Prodger, *Time Stands Still: Muybridge and the Instantaneous Photography Movement*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 2003, p. 220.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ Marta Braun, *Eadweard Muybridge*, cit., p. 207. It is likely that we will never know more information about the production of Plate 781: archivists at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, and George Eastman House, Rochester, where the *Animal Locomotion* proof prints and Muybridge's working notebooks are held, respectively, have informed me that no proof print or written record relating to *Chickens; scared by torpedo* is included among these items. Consequently, these two important sources of information must be treated as incomplete.

²⁹ E. J. Muybridge, *Patent No. 279,878: Method of and Apparatus for Photographing Changing or Moving Objects*, United States Patent Office, 19 June 1883, p. 2.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ See Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904)*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 1992, pp. 237-254. Whether one chooses to see such plates as exceeding or falling short of *Animal Locomotion*'s remit is down to personal opinion.

³² Signs of cropping are visible in 7a, 1b, 2b (especially) and 3b in the form of markings on the negatives (fig. 39).

³³ Eadweard Muybridge, *Animal Locomotion: An Electro-Photographic Investigation of Consecutive Phases of Animal Movements*, cit., p. 16.

³⁴ Edwin A. Kelley, *Appendix: A List of the Quadrupeds and Birds Represented in the Photographs*, in Dennis Marks et al., *Animal Locomotion: The Muybridge work at the University of Pennsylvania: The Method and the Result*, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1888, p. 101.

³⁵ See, for example, John Crawford, "On the Relation of the Domesticated Animals to Civilization," in *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, vol. 2, 1863, p. 449 and Esther Verhoef, Aad Rijs, *The Complete Encyclopedia of Chickens*, Rebo Publishers, Lisse 2009, pp. 11-12.

³⁶ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. X, The Encyclopaedia Britannica Company, New York 1910, p. 760.

³⁷ Too important to take on this role, the dog of *Plate 714* literally eclipses its "torpedo."

³⁸ Robert de la Sizeranne, "Le Photographe et l'artiste," in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, vol. 115, 1893, p. 849. My translation. The original reads: "Lorsqu'on feuillette les pages des albums de M. Muybridge, lorsqu'on pénètre ainsi peu à peu dans le mystère des tableaux que la nature déroule trop vite sous nos yeux pour que ceux-ci les puissent contempler, on éprouve des impressions très diverses et très contradictoires. Il y a là des tournures d'un galbe exquis et des postures d'un grotesque achevé."

³⁹ See, for example, László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting Photography Film*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1967; Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Reproducibility* (second version), in *Selected Writings*, vol. 3, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge-London 2002, pp. 101-133 and Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, MIT Press, Cambridge-London 1994.

⁴⁰ An., "Animal Locomotion," in *The Art Amateur*, vol. 18, no. 4, March 1888, p. 85.

⁴¹ Philippe Sollers, *The Bataille Act*, in Patrick ffrench, Roland-François Lack (eds.), *The Tel Quel Reader*, Routledge, London-New York 1998, p. 123.

⁴² An., "Fireworks," in *Strand Magazine*, vol. II, July-December 1891, pp. 473-474.

Mapping Tokyo's Cinemas: Asakusa's Urban Development in Meiji Japan

Introduction

After two hundred years of partial isolation, Japan opened to the world during the Meiji Period forced by Western countries. The fear of colonisation drove the Japanese Government to race towards modernisation in order to assimilate the country with Western powers. Japanese modernisation was influenced by foreign notions of modern and new living. Therefore, a new urban society arose that entailed mass culture and popular entertainment – literature, theatre and later on, cinema. Lumière's cinematograph arrived to Japan in 1897 – Edison's Vitascope had arrived one year earlier – prompting the start of Japan's film production.¹ Since then, cinema became a popular leisure form for the Japanese urban population. Despite its early start, the study of early Japanese film history has been limited by the low amount of surviving reels; only 4% of Japanese films shot before the mid-20s remain accessible.² Accordingly, there are not enough available works to trace a history of Japanese cinema before the mid-20s based only on film texts. The major histories of prominent scholars as David Bordwell or Tadao Sato³ have focused on historicising the text, and tend to concentrate on textual, historical or auteurist analyses; this has resulted on the detriment of other decisive factors in producing the cinematic experience, like the spectator, the industrial structure of film production or the construction and development of cinema theatres. Conventional analysis assumes a unified synchronic history of films. This interpretation may have failed to delve into the historical construction of Japanese cinema and to inquire about how relationships between cinema and history are mediated through various structures as those mentioned above. This paper explores the early history of Japanese cinema through the construction and development of the physical infrastructure to show movies: cinema theatres. Rather than textual readings of the available films, our approach links film and urban history to understand their synergies. Nonetheless, is it possible to do an analysis about the role of a practice, cinema's urban development, in order to know a little more about early Japanese

film history? We think that doing a deeply study about the development of moving images first venues we can reach a better understanding of this part of the film history and the city.

Our study focuses on Asakusa, an outskirt area in the north-east of Tokyo that became a popular entertainment district from the 19th century onwards. There, the first Japanese cinema theatre – the *Denkikan* – opened in 1903.⁴ Since then, the district developed as one of Tokyo's main leisure districts, which concentrated theatres, cinemas and amusement areas. The present study refers to cinemas as spaces of modernity and their role in the formation of a national Japanese cinema following the trail of the urban development of Asakusa in Tokyo. Since the 19th century the district developed as the place where the new urban class enjoyed the pleasures of modernity. Despite the limited number of Japanese reels, the development of Asakusa as an entertainment zone was well documented in books, film journals, photography and postcard collections and maps. Through the analysis of these sources, this paper aims to reveal a new aspect of Japanese film studies – the historically grounded sets of practices that create film history. This paper first gives an overview of Tokyo's urban development. Then, it follows a review regarding Asakusa's modern entertainment business and the appearance and development of the first cinema venues until the Kanto Earthquake in 1923.

From Edo to Tokyo

For European standards Tokyo can be considered a relatively recent city. When Tokugawa Ieyasu came to Edo in 1590,⁵ he inherited little more than the vestiges of a castle built in 1457 after a feudal lord selected the area of a small village called Edo to construct its castle.⁶ However, at the beginning of 17th century Edo raised in importance to become Japan's facto capital in 1603.⁷ At the end of the century the city developed a population around one million inhabitants. A city of that size was an unprecedented event in Japan and a series of projects started by the Tokugawa Government, called Bakufu, transformed the area.

During the first stage of city's formation topography was the element which most influenced its development. The Bakufu skilfully used the Sumida and Kanda rivers to serve as large-scale moats for the defence of Edo castle.⁸ The strategic use of the rivers and their channels divided the city in two sections – the high city or Yamanote in the higher grounds, housing the higher classes and the low city or Shitamachi in the lower grounds where commoners lived.⁹ The presence of a large stratum of warriors and their retainers required the procurement of a tremendous quantity of consumer goods, so merchants and artisans streamed to the capital from all parts of the country. Unlike high-class population common people operated their businesses from cramped quarters in the outskirt area, along major roads and rivers or from little shops in temple compounds.¹⁰ By the middle of 17th century the city had matured to become the major metropolis in all Asia.¹¹

In addition to commercial settlements entertainment centres were placed in the same spots – in the periphery – along the Sumida River, a major artery of transport. Leisure events for high-class population as Nôh drama performances, tea or incense ceremonies as well as poetry contests were private indoor activities on wealthy residences or famous temples and shrines. However the majority of Edo's population were male labourers, merchants and craftsmen demanding popular entertainment. Popular leisure was often performed on temporary stages for crowds outside the city that gathered at festivals fairs and anniversaries. Shows were frequently staged at famous spots in the city, firstly in Ryôgoku and Nihonbashi where the pleasure quarter of Yoshiwara was placed, secondly in Ueno and Asakusa a place close to the relocation of Yoshiwara.¹²

In a time where the concept of leisure for common people didn't exist temple areas offered their role as public space in Japan. Before Japan's opening to the Western countries the modern concept of the urban park as a public open space was unknown. To commoner population temples and shrines offered the functions associat-

ed with urban parks. The area around the temple quick developed into popular entertainment districts where merchants and entertainers made good use of the zone outside the temple gates as Sorensen notes to develop "amusement quarters with theatres, tea houses, food stalls and archery booths whose attendants were attractive young women who also offered more intimate services."¹³

In the second half of 18th century Japan opened to Western countries and the city started a third stage of development. First of all its name was changed from Edo, which means "estuary" to Tokyo, "the Eastern capital."¹⁴ Tokyo changes went beyond the mere rename to affect the city's physical and cultural fabric. As Jinnai notes "during this period, a loose modernization was carried out by superimposing Western elements onto legacy of Edo."¹⁵ The city kept its urban structure morphology but it changed the land use and the image of buildings; new functions according to the new times and needs appeared in the old lots division. At the same time buildings started to assimilate to Western designs representing the new styles adopted from foreign countries.¹⁶ The preeminent symbols of modernisation and westernisation to emerge were the first rail road from Shinbashi station in Tokyo to Yokohama in 1872, the built of a commercial and residential area of two-story western style red brick buildings in Ginza and the designation in 1873 of public parks as public spaces.¹⁷

Japanese government linked modernity with the urban experience. The cascade of investments in urban development reinvented the city as a socio-spatial new form and generated new ways of social and cultural movements. In the second half of 19th century the city was filled with engineering wonders, industrial exhibitions and other type of demonstrations to promote progress and development, "the city became a site of intense engagement around future prospects."¹⁸ The economic growth and city's development altered the existing social environment inherited from Edo. The formation of an industry, the proliferation of rail roads, street cars and suburbs, the establishment of road networks all over the country and the political and administrative reforms, allowed Japan to enter into the modern and Western model as well as permitted the rise of a new type of population, the middle-class. New practices of work, factory work or office clerk, and new professions such as teacher, waitress or streetcar conductor also brought a new organisation of time, and the most important new ways of leisure time.

For the first time in Japan the street became a common space. Street is the place between work and home, a space of consumption and entertainment. The department stores built in Ginza represented the heights of modernity: window shopping, consuming food or drink or visiting art galleries was one of the features of the new urban classes.¹⁹ Ueno temple area in the northeast of Tokyo became one of the first Western style parks used to celebrate the National Industrial Exhibition between 1873 and 1890 and other types of exhibitions. Asakusa, an outskirt of the city originated hundreds of years before Edo, became the focus of Shitamachi cultural life for low and middle classes until almost today.

Asakusa's urban birth and development

Japan's opening to Western countries entailed the rapid modernisation of the country. The Japanese authorities fostered socioeconomic changes in order to assimilate Japan to foreign powers and avoid colonisation. This transformation converted the old city of Edo into the modern Tokyo that soon became the symbol of the new Japan. At the same time, the cultural transformation of the city was palpable in Asakusa, the traditional leisure quarter of Tokyo that became the centre of popular and modern entertainment with theatres, amusement parks and cinemas.

Asakusa was a little village of fishermen in a cove at Edo bay time before the formation of the city. The development of the village was always linked to the Sensoji temple and the commercial necessities around the Shogun's

castle. In 628 AD when the capital of Japan was the city of Nara in the southeast of the country and Asakusa was an unnamed village. The legend says that a statue of the Goddess Kannon was caught by two fishermen who were fishing in Sumida River. The village's headman immediately realized the importance of the Buddhist figure so he took vows as a Buddhist priest and remade his home into a temple to honour the deity.²⁰ For years people arrived in increasing numbers to pray in Sensoji. Common people as well as renowned priests, the military and noble figures, demonstrated devotion to the deity glorifying the area and helping to reform the main temple. Its reconstruction was followed by the design of new gardens and the erection of shrines around the temple.²¹ The fishing village thrived around the merged life brought by Sensoji, the oldest temple in today's Tokyo.

In the first years of 19th century Edo was a residential military city, the 60% of the area was took for military residence, and a 20% for temples and common dwellers. Despite the city's fast growth Edo was a consumption area not a producer one. Most of the products arrived from Kiki area in the south of the country by boat and reached the city's downtown sailing on Sumida and Kanda rivers and its channels. From 17th century all Edo had become a department store with more than 370 store houses on the outskirts of the city.²² Asakusa was a devotional area and a rice granary fully of rice brokers and financial agents. The placement of the rice market is remarkable fact regarding the development of the area. Military stipends were on rice basis so Asakusa became an area with a huge economic activity as well as religious and commercial activities.

Before Japan's opening to Western countries, the temples controlled some of the spaces partially open to the public.²³ Temple festivals, local markets, ceremonies and shows took place on temple grounds and outside the gates. In these occasions, large crowds of people were allowed to access those places that were once forbidden and enjoy them. The districts near the temple areas frequently developed into popular entertainment zones called *Sakariba*.²⁴ Common people took profit of these events by installing their businesses outside the gates. Due to its cultural and economic importance, the Sensoji temple – the oldest and most devoted temple in Edo – quickly became the main centre of commoner popular culture and business.²⁵ The perfect mix to improve Asakusa as a popular entertainment place was made by Japanese authorities: a big and renowned temple area which attracted a lot of people and businesses, the relocation of the pleasure quarter of Yoshiwara to the north grounds of the area, and finally the creation of the first public open spaces in 1873.

Although it has been noted that temples were most prone to develop leisure activities in its surrounding area that is not reason enough to explain the development of Asakusa as the most famous leisure destination in Edo-Tokyo until almost today. Nonetheless, Asakusa's leisure activities developed beyond being a mere accumulation of business and brothels to become one of the cultural centres of the country.²⁶ The leisure of Edo ended being placed in the periphery of Tokyo because as Jinnai notes: "They were seen as public spaces that transcended the logic of the status. The people of Edo possessed a unique bad space, and this space produced much of the popular culture of the city."²⁷ In the same way that topography separated classes there was a marked functional distinction between centre and periphery: while central Tokyo or central Edo had the economic and political functions, the periphery was for leisure and popular culture. In 1842 the majority of Kabuki theatres were moved to the proximity of Asakusa temple to a place called *Sarunwachô*.²⁸ By the last decades of the 19th century the temple district of Asakusa had a quick commercial development and at the same time became the focus of *Shitamachi* cultural life.

Modern Asakusa

With the advent of modernisation, the new capital of Japan needed public spaces able to resemble those of the West. Modernity was also about the acquisition of territory for public purpose.²⁹ Even though temples and

shrines realised an essential role as open spaces, they were essentially private and religious areas. The cultural and political leaders of Meiji society who travelled to European countries and United States of America undertook several initiatives to build a modern and powerful country.³⁰ The principal goal of Meiji government was the recognition of Japan as a civilized country as the Western nations. This process faced challenges in different areas like industry, education, arts, science or urbanism. Soon middle classes became agents of "the new" and the development of the city promoted a modern space where the population celebrated Tokyo as a city in progress. The birth of tourism industry, rail road system, industrial exhibitions, multi-storied brick buildings and open public spaces represented a society racing forward in terms of time and modernity. One of the most popular urban improvements in Tokyo was the institution in 1873 of public parks:

In prefectures including Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto, there are places of historic interest, scenic beauty, and recreation and relaxation where people can visit and enjoy themselves, for example the Kinryu-zan Senso-ji Temple and the Higashi Eizan Kan'ei-ji Temple in Tokyo and the Yasakasha Shrine, the Kiyomizu Temple, and Arashiyama in Kyoto. Prefectures having such places, including those previously owned by temples and shrines, shall file an application to the Finance Ministry for permission to transform them into public parks with detailed drawing plans attached to the application form.³¹

The western surroundings of Sensoji temple were instituted by Tokyo's Government as one of the five public parks. As Liotta notes: "The new act of 1873 recognized the temple as owner of the whole area but assigned the park administration to the city of Tokyo. This fact represented a revolution in the history of administration of the public space."³² Sensoji temple was a well-known space for business and entertainment. The area outside the temple called *Nakamise* was a long street with little shops selling food, beverage and souvenirs even today. The next area just in front of the main gate called *Kaminarimon*, started the amusement quarter with tea houses and the theatres relocated in 1842. With the creation of the Asakusa Park Sensoji temple district became one of the most famous new public spaces thanks to its combination of gardens, ponds and entertainment attractions. For the first time in the history of the city the people of Tokyo shared a unique place. Low, middle and high classes begin to share not only the same spaces but the activities offered by merchants and entertainers in those places.

The urban transformation of Asakusa until the formation of the park can be traced in time as follows:

1. the relocation of Yoshiwara pleasure quarter in 1660;
2. the creation of open spaces for fire prevention from 1662;³³
3. the expansion of the Rice broker market in 1724;
4. the relocation of Kabuki theatres in 1842;
5. the opening of Asakusa Park in 1873.

The creation of Asakusa Park attracted an increasing number of entertainment business in its surroundings. The neighbourhood embodied the spirit of great change and modernity characteristic of Meiji Japan, a district where entertainers, merchants and common people co-existed with monks, prostitutes and westerners. In a few years, changes in the physical fabric of Asakusa entailed considerable transformations in the area.

Rokku, the sixth district

In 1884 Asakusa was divided into seven sections (fig. 43):

1. *Iku*,³⁴ the area of Sensoji temple.
2. *Niku*, Nakamise Street. The shopping district.

3. *Sanku*, the Denpoin Pond. Sensoji gardens.
4. *Yonku*, the Hyotan Pond. Asakusa Park.
5. *Goku*, Hanayashiki Park, the first amusement park in Japan.
6. *Rokku*, the southwest land from Sensoji temple was the entertainment area of Asakusa.
7. *Nanaku*, residential area.

The sixth sector would become the popular entertainment district in Asakusa. In 1884 Tokyo's government ordered to move the show houses from behind temple grounds near the river, a famous place called *Okuyama*, to the sixth block. In the new location show business continued to present *Gentô*, a Japanese traditional magic lantern show used as a protocinematic reference for journalists and scholars to explain to the Japanese audience the processes of projection of moving images time before its arrival to Japan.³⁵ In the sixth block there were also other kinds of traditional entertainment as *Misemono*, the Japanese freak show, *Ikiningyô*, lifelike *papier-mâché* dolls, Japanese acrobats or *Yose Shibai*, Japanese vaudeville. Besides, imported mechanical gadgets, Western circus and Western shops attracted an increasing number of Western and Japanese customers.³⁶ In the last decade of the 19th century, *Rokku* – the sixth district – became the best example of modern Tokyo and represented how popular culture transformed the city's urban space. The *Rokku* district had the most popular entertainment scene, a place to enjoy the modernity of Western atmosphere and technology and traditional amusements at the same time. Asakusa became a space completely new in Japan. Asakusa attracted an increasing number of customers and soon new elements were added to enjoy old and new entertainments.

As well as in Ginza district was built a Western style commercial avenue and residential red brick quarter in 1870s Mitsubishi Company also planned in 1890 a Mitsubishi red brick street called "Marunouchi London Street," today's Marunouchi business area.³⁷ These kind of buildings captivated the attention of the city's people. The old-house theatres of *Okuyama* in their new location in *Rokku* district started to redecorate or rebuild the buildings with neo-baroque designs. The new edifices were built as far as possible in Western style in order to pique people's curiosity. As Jinnai notes, "The quickest way to lure customers was to astonish them with the appearance of the buildings."³⁸ The buildings, the land use, the people and the shows of *Rokku* area were considered a new urban space that stood out for its modern atmosphere.

One of the most significant places in the northern area of Asakusa Park – still working today – was operating fifteen years before the opening of Japan to the world: *Hanayashiki*, the oldest amusement park in all Japan. Originally opened for high class women as a private flower garden in 1853,³⁹ the garden was functioning until the urban restructuration of Asakusa. The transformation of *Hanayashiki* into an amusement park took place in 1873 with the new Tokyo Government's act of public spaces. In that year *Hanayashiki* was bought by a young entrepreneur who started to import rare and exotic animals and exercise machines to attract people. Various pavilions were installed in 1883, including the *Omeganekan* to enjoy stereoscopic images. In 1888 one of the most popular facilities was a five-storied pavilion named *Ozankaku*, an extremely popular skyscraper and, a year later, a diorama gallery showing historic scenes was opened, followed by the installation of a Gramophone inside *Ozankaku* in 1890 in order to attract more people. These facilities among others like a merry-go-round, Ferris wheel and years after an Edison's Kinetoscope saloon contributed to transform the old garden into the most famous entertainment place in Asakusa.⁴⁰

Attracted by the success of *Hanayashiki*, a series of new show businesses linked to Western technologies appeared in the area. In 1887 a replica of Mount Fuji was located in the southwest area of *Rokku* district. With a height of 32 meters, a surface area of 273 meters and a telescope in the top provided a high location from where visitors could look out over the city. This replica was a very popular attraction but in 1890 was destroyed by a huge storm and was never reconstructed.⁴¹

Nevertheless, the symbol of Asakusa at the end of the 19th century was the *Ryôunkaku* tower (fig. 44). Built in

1890, the tower was designed by the British engineer William K. Barton.⁴² *Ryôunkaku* was a twelve storied tower and the first tall modern building built in Japan, equipped with an elevator leading to the 8th floor. The building was sixty meters in height. Like other tall buildings in the area, the tower offered telescopes for peeping over the city in the 11th and 12th floors. In addition to that, visitors could purchase imported products at shops in any floor inside the tower; and in the 9th floor there was a gallery to exhibit Western art.⁴³ One of the most interesting characteristics of this building was the electrification. In 1890 started the age of electricity in Japan. Although the first electric light was used in 1878, it was no common to enjoy electric light for illumination purpose. In 1890 Fujioka Ishisuke, the founder of today's Toshiba Company, started the national production of incandescent bulbs in Japan. *Ryôunkaku* tower enjoyed the electric light for the first time in Asakusa.⁴⁴ In *Ryôunkaku* tower people could also enjoy the modern national proud. *Ryônkaku* tower became a symbol of Japan modernisation and a lighthouse in the entertainment street along *Rokku* district. A lot of cultural, social and political events took place in the tower until it collapsed in 1923 during Kanto earthquake.

One of the last modern attractions built in the sixth block before the arrival of the first permanent cinema in 1903 was the Japan Panorama Hall. Inaugurated in 1896, it was the first permanent theatre made for watching panoramic photos. Before that, in 1890, a Panorama Hall had been built in Ueno Park for the Third National Industrial Exhibition but it was not permanent. A panorama boom started and many cities as well as other districts of Tokyo began to construct Panorama Halls. The Japan Panorama Hall was very popular because of its war scenes, but the high cost of changing the depictions and the arrival of moving images forced its closure in 1909.⁴⁵

First moving images

The Edison's Kinetoscope was introduced in Japan in 1896 by Takahashi Shinji who saw the machine at the Chicago International Exposition in 1893. The following year, in January 1897, the Lumière's Cinematograph and Edison's Vitascope were imported. Because the Kinetoscope was a box projecting a small number of pictures just for one viewer, Cinematograph and Vitascope soon replaced the Kinetoscope. The Cinematograph was imported by Inabata Katsutarô who was studying textile engineering in Lyon with August Lumière. The first preview showing was held in the gardens of the Kyoto Electric Company in February 1897. A couple of days after the first public projection was held in Osaka in the Nanchi Enbujô theatre. However Inabata has no experience in entertainment business and soon left the show business and returned to their fabric factories. It is not clear how many machines Inabata imported, maybe two or three, but he did it thinking in an educational purpose: "I was very much amazed. I thought that the Cinematograph was much more suitable than still photographs for the presentation of European culture in Japan."⁴⁶ The apparatus was presented as a symbol of Western culture as well as a source of Western knowledge useful for Japanese. For the first showings in Kyoto and Osaka the places were decorated in Western style and Western music was performed. Inabata gave the Cinematograph to Yokota Einosuke, a businessman from Kobe who imported Western electrical gadgets and X-Ray machines. Yokota Einosuke, who will become the first director of Nikkatsu Studios, took the Cinematograph to Tokyo on March 1897⁴⁷ and presented the machine firstly in the Kawakamiza theatre and secondly in the Kanda Kinkikan theatre...

Furthermore in March 1897 Araki Waichi and Arai Saburô from Arai Company imported the Edison's Vitascope. The first public show was held in February in the Shinmachi Enbujô theatre in Osaka and one month later they presented the Vitascope in Tokyo firstly in the Kanda Kinkikan theatre and secondly in the Kabukiza theatre. Arai Saburô was the owner of an import business in Tokyo. He was working and travelling in United States of America for several years, as well as Yokota did, and even designed a Japanese house and a

garden for the Chicago World Fair of 1893. A fierce competition between Vitascope and Cinematograph started and soon new contenders appeared.

However, the first moving images entrepreneurs soon faced a technological problem: the Vitascope required direct current and the Cinematograph and Kinetoscope needed electrical power. At that time Japan was moderately electrified so the first Tokyo projections were placed in like the Kinkikan theatre, the Kabukiza or the Kawakamiza as we said before.⁴⁸ In order to deal with the lack of electricity Asakusa's entertainment saloons redesigned Vitascope projector's engine, attempting to show the new Western machine to its audience. There were also electrical problems with exhibiting the Vitascope in the United States. The first Vitascope machines were made to work only on direct current and in 1896 in United States or in 1897 in Japan lighting systems were poor or a mixture of incompatible currents and voltages.⁴⁹ As Dym notes: "they overcame the problem by modifying a gas engine to use as a power source for the projector."⁵⁰

At the end of the 19th century, and because most films were short, there was no need to build permanent theatres to show moving images. *Hanayashiki*, theatres and lantern magic saloons started to project them. The theatres of *Rokku* ward started to hire kabuki actors to narrate the two or three minutes long reels and a technician, sometimes a westerner, to introduce an explanation about this new Western invention. Soon, moving images became a successful business and in 1897 Konishi Photography shop in Tokyo started to import not just projectors but Gaumont Cameras. The first Japanese shots were scenes of Nihonbashi, Asakusa and Ginza. In 1899 they filmed geisha dances, kabuki actors and picture postcard motifs to show to the public. In addition to this, a company called Yoshizawa Shôten originally involved in magic lantern business in Asakusa started to produce movie projectors in 1900. These two events opened the way for a national cinema; Japanese film production and production companies began their activity.⁵¹

In the first years of the 20th century moving images became the most attractive business and leisure activity as well, so the Yoshizawa Company started to import enough films to allow up to two months of showing in one location. In addition to that, the Russo-Japanese war between 1904 and 1905 and the Japanese victory triggered patriotic emotions in the Japanese audience, who demanded films about the conflict. The Yoshizawa Company took advantage of this opportunity and started the production of war documentaries as well as contemporary social reportages to attract more customers.

The Denkikan and other cinemas

There were plenty of theatres in the main street of *Rokku* area, near Asakusa Park and *Ryounkaku* tower, and the Yoshizawa company chose that location to open the first permanent cinema in 1903 called *Denkikan*, literally "electric building" to show the imported films. The place had previously been a hall for displaying electric devices and during Yoshizawa's projections a former X-Ray clinic was operating inside the *Denkikan*. The building, with 240 seats of capacity, was the first cinema hall with a permanent projector and completely electrified.⁵²

The cinema was designed using a Western architectural style, decorated with columns, spires, domes and arched windows; a design called Japanese neo-baroque (fig. 45). Western style buildings attracted the attention of people by themselves, so the Yoshizawa company built the *Denkikan* in a neo baroque style to show western films and to pique people's curiosity. The first and second stories of the building were covered with vertical banners, portraits of the actors and large movie posters.

The cinema was completely dedicated to imported films-except for the Russo-Japanese war documentaries – until Yoshizawa built the first cinema studio in Meguro district in 1908. In Meguro Studio Yoshizawa started

to produce national films based on kabuki and popular stories to show in the *Denkikan*. After the Russo-Japanese war the moving image industry seemed more stable so in the summer of 1907 Yoshizawa Company attempting to cut the company's dependence on imported films, started the construction of a single-story traditional Japanese house, a small pond in an elegant garden, and a shed. This was the first studio in Japan. In 1908 the built an all-glass shooting studio to continuing work even in bad weather. The success of Yoshizawa Company quickly inspired others to open cinema houses nearby and for a brief period of time *Rokku's* main street became the film centre of Japan. All the cinemas built in the same Western style were positioned along one street and the crowds of people who walked down that street felt as if they had entered a new time in a Western city full of neo-baroque style buildings (fig. 46).

Unfortunately, the *Denkikan* like all entertainment businesses in Asakusa, was burned in the 1923 fire that followed the Great Kanto Earthquake. The earthquake being a setback, a new era flourished afterwards nonetheless. All the cinema industry was relocated while *Rokku's* entertainment houses were rebuilt and reshaped the area. The *Denkikan* and the rest of cinemas replaced the neo-baroque style by a modern architectural style close to the Western Art Deco architectural techniques.⁵³ Finally, the *Denkikan* survived the American air raids during World War Two but finally closed in 1976.

In 1907 the second permanent cinema in the area was built by Yoshizawa Company too. The *Sanyûkan* was bigger than the *Denkikan* – around a thousand seats – and equipped with modern projectors. The company hired *tehiki*⁵⁴ and famous film narrators called *benshi* to perform Japanese and Western films in order to attract more customers. The cinema phenomenon soon spread its influence over the area and the old theatre houses in *Rokku* district were demolished to build more cinemas. In 1908 the *Taishokan* opened as a cinema specializing in Western films but in a short time it started to combine Japanese and Western reels. The *Taishokan* was one of the first cinemas to open at 10 a.m. and to offer special seats at special rates for children and women and underprivileged customers.⁵⁵ This cinema was built by a construction company that is still active today, called Daiyasu using the latest construction equipment and modern architecture techniques in order to introduce the cinema as the flagship modern building of the company. The *Asakusa Operakan* inaugurated in 1909 opened as a renovation of the *Nihonkan*, a theatre built in 1883. Although it was originally opened as a Japanese moving picture hall, it was also used for plays and operas. The Yoshizawa Company bought it in 1912 and it became the company's headquarters.

By 1908 and 1909 there was a fierce competition in the industry of movie theatres.⁵⁶ The Tokyo's Government started to see spectators as troublemakers and movie theatres as unhealthy places with no ventilation where women, children and men from all classes shared a lot of time together. This kind of factors made more difficult to obtain an approval for the construction of a new movie theatre.⁵⁷ Tahata Kenzo a pharmaceutical businessman believed that Tokyo Government was planning to limit the number of new movie theatres to one per city wards so he formed a company, the Fukuhodo Movie Theatre, to buy properties in various wards throughout the city in order to resell the land to the established movie companies and obtain financial gains. For some reason the government limitation never happened and Fukuhodo was forced to enter in the show business. By 1910 he built eight movie theatres built up in concrete structures and a small studio in northern Tokyo.

Rokku district concentrated a huge number of cinemas (fig. 47). Between 1907 and 1911 more than 20 cinemas were built in Asakusa, accounting for a total of 60 in the whole Japan. In 1923 before the Kanto Earthquake there were 23 cinemas. All of them were placed just in one street of a city's district in the same Japanese neo-baroque model. Asakusa's *Eiga gai* allowed audiences to experience a modern city and its spaces, both lost with the natural disaster. This entertainment district is still regarded as unique because of its spatial characteristics and because the trace that Japanese early films printed there. The modern history of Asakusa is an example of how an urban design allows us to understand the development of a new entertainment. An entire area devoted

to a variety of shows, all considered modern because all of them were mechanical inventions, electrified and wrapped in a Western architectural style.

Paved roads, electric street lamps and a mass consumer culture had been linked to the cinema area of Asakusa. *Rokku* was the first cinema district and in the first decade of the 20th century the district changed its name to *Eiga Gai* literally "cinema city." All the area changed into a Western and modern urban atmosphere attuned with the Meiji government's proclamations about progress, enlightenment and modernization. New cinemas were built in the main street of *Eiga Gai* on both sides sharing the space with theatres, tea halls and cafes. To enjoy the taste of modernization the majority of cinemas were specialized in Western films, but as mentioned above, the beginning of the Russo-Japanese war in 1904-1905 encouraged the national industry to produce patriotic films and reels about Japanese traditional and popular culture.

The district's style changed according to the trends of the time. Neo-baroque style was used when the first moving images arrived in order to assimilate the entertainment experience into a Western environment. When national production began, the theatre houses in the *Rokku* district started to show kabuki films to delight the theatre audiences. At first, the success of the moving images had been seen as a threat for theatre businessmen but, after the Kanto Earthquake, modern style buildings were rebuilt because the most significant film companies were firmly established and experimented not just only doing Japanese historic films but Western inspired stories and styles too. *Rokku* ward was a place where it was possible to envision the future in the present.

Illustrations

43. The Asakusa temple district map, date 1898. Provided by the Tokyo Metropolitan Library online catalog.
44. The Ryounkaku Tower in Asakusa Park, date unknown. Courtesy of the Nagasaki University Library.
45. The Denkikan, date 1914. Provided by the Digital Library from the Meiji Era. National Diet Library of Japan.
46. The Asakusa cinema street, date unknown.
47. Asakusa tourist map, date 1917. Provided by the Digital Library from the Meiji Era. National Diet Library of Japan.

Notes

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- ³ See for instance, David Bordwell, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1988; Tadao Satō, *Nihon Eigashi*, Iwanami Shōten, Tokyo 1995, vol. 1.
- ⁴ Junichirō Tanaka, *Nihon Eiga Hattatsu Shi*, cit.
- ⁵ Matsunosuke Nishiyama, *Edo Culture. Daily life and diversions in Urban Japan, 1600-1868*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 1997.

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- ⁹ Hidenobu Jinnai, *Tokyo: A Spatial Anthropology* (*Tôkyô no kûkan jinruigaku*, Chikuma Shobo, Tokyo 1985), University of California Press, Berkeley 1995, p. 5.
- ¹⁰ Matsunosuke Nishiyama, *Edo Culture. Daily life and diversions in Urban Japan, 1600-1868*, cit.
- ¹¹ Agustín Y. Kondo, *Japón, evolución histórica de un pueblo hasta 1650*, cit.
- ¹² In the second half of 18th century Edo was a centre of political power, entertainment and consumption, but the Great Fire of Meireki in 1657 devastated around the 70% of the city and killed more than one hundred thousand of people. After the fire the Bakufu reshaped its districts and relocated the social and commercial activities.
- ¹³ André Sorensen, *The Making of Urban Japan: Cities and Planning from Edo to the Twenty-first Century*, Routledge, London 2002, p. 31.
- ¹⁴ Roman Cybriwsky, *Tokyo*, cit.
- ¹⁵ Hidenobu Jinnai, *Tokyo: A Spatial Anthropology*, cit., p. 3.
- ¹⁶ Roman Cybriwsky, *Tokyo*, cit.
- ¹⁷ Louise Young, *Beyond the Metropolis: Second Cities and Modern Life in Interwar Japan*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2013.
- ¹⁸ *Idem*, p. 130.
- ¹⁹ Vera Mackie, *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from 1910s to the 1930s*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 2000.
- ²⁰ Naoto Horikiri, *Asakusa*, Yûbun Shoin Publishing, Tokyo 2004.
- ²¹ Keisho Ishiguro, *Meiji no Tôkyô shashin*, Kadokawa Publishing, Tokyo 2011, p. 146.
- ²² Agustín Y. Kondo, *Japón, evolución histórica de un pueblo hasta 1650*, cit.
- ²³ Hidenobu Jinnai, *Tokyo: A Spatial Anthropology*, cit.
- ²⁴ Amusement areas (my translation).
- ²⁵ Horikiri Naoto, *Asakusa Edo Meiji Hen*, Yûbun Shoin Publishing, Tokyo 2005.
- ²⁶ Roman Cybriwsky, *Tokyo*, cit.
- ²⁷ Hidenobu Jinnai, *Tokyo: A Spatial Anthropology*, cit., p. 98.
- ²⁸ Naoto Horikiri, *Asakusa*, cit.
- ²⁹ Akira Naitô, *Edo, the City that Became Tokyo: An Illustrated History*, (or. *Edo no machi*, Shôshisha Publishing, Tokyo 1982) Kodansha International, New York 2003.
- ³⁰ During the early Meiji period Japanese government used diverse slogans to illustrate the unprecedented changes and challenges in Japanese society. The most famous slogans in Meiji Japan were *fukoku kyôhei* (rich country, strong army), *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment) and *shokusan kôgyô* (encourage industry). These catchphrases became the basement of the process of modernisation. See W. G. Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1972.
- ³¹ National Diet Library, *The Meiji and Taisho eras in Photographs*. <http://www.ndl.go.jp/scenery/e/column/ueno-park.html>.
- ³² Salvador-John Liotta, "A Study on the History of Cinema-City in Asakusa, Tokyo," in *Journal of Architecture and Planning*, vol. 74, no. 637, 2009, pp. 617-625.
- ³³ During the Edo period the city was frequently destroyed by numerous fires caused by earthquakes or domestic accidents. One of the fire prevention measures was the creation of wide streets and open spaces called *Hirokôji* and *Hirokechi* to serve as a fire barrier zone. After the great fire of Meireki in 1657 these fire protection zones were set up from Asakusa to Ueno. See William W. Kelly, *Incendiary Actions: Fires and Firefighting in the Shogun's Capital and the People's City*, in James L. McClain (eds.), *Edo and Paris. Urban Life and the State in the Early Modern Era*, Cornell University Press, Cornell 1994.
- ³⁴ Japanese wards are named with the combination of two characters. The first character it corresponds with a number and the second one with the character meaning ward. Ikku, first ward, niku, second ward and so on.
- ³⁵ Starting 1890s Japanese newspapers began publishing articles about Edison's works and other new Western technologies regarding images and moving images. See Yoshinobu Tsukada, *Nihon eigashi no kenkyû*, Gendai Shokan, Tokyo 1980.

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- ³⁶ Horikiri Naoto, *Asakusa Edo Meiji Hen*, cit.
- ³⁷ *Ibidem*.
- ³⁸ Hidenobu Jinnai, *Tokyo: A Spatial Anthropology*, cit., p. 109.
- ³⁹ Yoshinobu Tsukada, *Nihon eigashi no kenkyû*, cit., p. 183.
- ⁴⁰ For information about *Hanayashiki* and its amusement installations see Taitôku Kyôikuiinkai, *Enko Kogyôshi*, Taitôku Kyôikuiinkai Ed., Tokyo 1983, pp. 39-48.
- ⁴¹ Yoshinobu Tsukada, *Nihon eigashi no kenkyû*, cit., p. 175.
- ⁴² *Idem*, p. 618.
- ⁴³ *Idem*, pp. 49-54.
- ⁴⁴ Hiromichi Hosoda, *Asakusa Jûnikai Tô no Nagame to Kindai no manadoshi*, Seidosha Publishing, Tokyo 2011.
- ⁴⁵ *Idem*, p. 176.
- ⁴⁶ Hiroshi Komatsu, "The Lumière Cinématographe and the Production of the Cinema in Japan in the Earliest Period," in *Film History*, vol. 8, 1996, p. 433.
- ⁴⁷ Peter B. High, "The Dawn of Cinema in Japan," in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1984, pp. 23-57.
- ⁴⁸ Tadao Satô, *Nihon eiga no tanjô*, Iwanami Shôten Ed., Tokyo 1985, pp. 3-12.
- ⁴⁹ Robert C. Allen, *Vitascope/Cinématographe: Initial Patterns of American Film Industrial Practice*, in John L. Fell (ed.), *Film before Griffith*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1983.
- ⁵⁰ Jeffrey A. Dym, *Benshi, Japanese Silent Film Narrators and Their Forgotten Narrative Art of Setsumei: A History of Japanese Silent Film Narrators*, Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston 2003, p. 24.
- ⁵¹ Hiroshi Komatsu, *Some characteristics of Japanese Cinema before World War I*, in Arthur Nalletti, Daniel Desser (eds.), *Reframing Japanese cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1992, pp. 232-233.
- ⁵² *Idem*, p. 14.
- ⁵³ *Ibidem*.
- ⁵⁴ Beautiful young women who escorted the customers to their seats.
- ⁵⁵ Matsuda Film Productions, *The Benshi-Japanese Silent Film Narrators*, Urban Connections Ed., Tokyo 2001, p. 153.
- ⁵⁶ Peter B. High, "The Dawn of Cinema in Japan," cit.
- ⁵⁷ Chieo Yoshida, *Mô Hitotsu no Eiga Shi. Katsuben no Jidai*, Jiji Tsûjinsha Publishing, Tokyo 1978.

Galvanometer and Light-Valves: An Archeology of Dolby SVA in Italy

*Foreword*¹

Just before Christmas 2013, Technicolor's headquarters in France decided to close all of their European studios, including the Italian one. This decision was totally unexpected, and brings to an end the history of International Recording, founded in 1957, which was one of the most celebrated sound post-production facilities in Europe. I wish to dedicate the first part of this article to the dubbing engineers and technicians whose fate has changed so suddenly. In particular, my thanks go to Paolo Biondo, Federico Savina and Alberto Sbroscia, who guided me in collecting oral accounts of the history of this facility.

*Research context*²

The Italian-American Giuseppe Biondo was Radio Corporation of America (RCA)'s leading point man for Europe (figg. 48-49). He had served Westinghouse and then RCA in its New York headquarters for nearly 20 years, ever since he had arrived in America in 1924.³ He then became director of the RCA Paris Office, the leading European office for RCA's commercial strategies. Soon after the war, in December 1945, Giuseppe Biondo embarked for Italy.⁴ In only a few years he was to create an operation destined to change the technological and cultural paradigms of postwar Italy, in a complex chain of events whose main points I shall summarize here. In 1947, RCA participated in the Milan Fair, a European showcase for American companies just after the war.⁵ RCA was the first US company to present a television system in Europe. Rome represented the heart of the nation's political life at a moment in history when important decisions about the country's future technological structures were in the making, that a few years later included, for instance, television standards. Rome was also the city of Cinema. RCA was immediately entrusted with a series of important commissions from Cinecittà. Even more sig-

nificant were its contracts with the Ministry of Defense, for which it provided radar and communication devices. A fervent Catholic, RCA's president Frank Folsom was relying on the Holy See's strategic involvement in creating the future Italian RTI (Radio e Televisione Italiana, subsequently renamed Italian RCA).⁶

Figure 51 shows Biondo and Folsom in front of the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) offices in Rome. The ECA was the Marshall Plan's executive branch.⁷ As oral sources maintain,⁸ the most important fact in the Italian RCA's industrial history was a huge financial contribution from the Marshall Plan devoted to building the vinyl printing facilities in Rome. With this operation, music attained a central position in the Plan's propaganda operations: the Cold War had already begun, and was manifesting itself among other things through the creation of a new postwar Italian musical culture that defined a new soundscape for postwar Italy, with important implications for both the history of popular music in Italy – a certain distance was in fact taken from musical folklore during these years – and the history of film music, given that composers began to look westwards in the coming years.

Following various maneuvers carried out by the Vatican to increase its control over RCA, in 1957 Biondo left RCA and set up a new establishment, International Recording (IR), devoted primarily to what he identified at the time as the most profitable activity, namely music recording – especially for movies – and film sound post-production. The recording rooms' acoustics were the work of Michael Rettinger, an international authority on studio acoustics (who at the time had already engineered many recording studios in Hollywood).⁹ This, according to several sources, was the first Italian recording room with a decidedly "American" sound.¹⁰

Production process (1959: an overview)

While in the realm of literature historical and critical research proceeds apace, less progress has been made on the history of techniques and production processes, in particular for film sound. Until the 1980s every facility was a world of its own from a technical standpoint. This high degree of personalization of systems and production flows poses significant historiographical problems. Sometimes circuits were modified on the spot, without any prior project drawings: these changes may at times have turned out to be opaque even to those who made them, and engineers often had to resort to reverse engineering to understand their own logic. Even where projects did exist they were lost together with the devices, thrown out once they became obsolete.

When these devices are analyzed, an intimidating stratigraphy emerges. In this paper I shall examine the case of optical recorders – an emblematic example of technical archeology. I will now consider the production process from a bird's eye view.¹¹

Figures 50 and 52, taken a few weeks before its inauguration, shows International Recording's projection booth and music booth.¹² The control room, located under the projection booth, at level 0 contains two mono Ampex models (one of which is not visible in the picture: one model has 350 electronics with octal base valves, the other has 351 electronics with noval base valves); two 2-track Ampex 351 models (one not visible in the picture) and two 3-track Ampex models on ½-inch tape (300-3, with 351 electronics and Sel-Sync units).¹³ The 12 channel control room console was made by Westrex Italia. According to several oral sources,¹⁴ this was the first fader console installed in an Italian studio. A mechanical system of wires, moved by the fader, acted upon a Daven potentiometer, already in use in the RCA consoles. The preamplifiers, compressors and filters were manufactured entirely by RCA: BA-21A preamps, BA-23A amplifiers, and BA6 compressors.¹⁵ The control room speakers were three Tannoy Gold (15" duo cone) models arranged in horseshoe formation around the console, amplified by three McIntosh 60W. The projectors are two IPC Simplex models. Only partially visible on the right are the twelve recorders for 35mm perforated magnetic tape – RCA make, Film Phonograph model – to which one optical head must be added, visible in the picture (third from last rack towards the back). The last rack is a

recorder made by RCA. On the second-last rack there is a Tannoy loudspeaker, from which recordists in the booth monitored the audio of the sound heads. At the far end of figure 50, beyond the door separating the music booth from the soloist room, we can glimpse the electronics of the optical sound-on-film recorder: a variable-area RCA Photophone, galvanometer system.

Among the machines of the transcription department, I would like now to focus on a particularly complex one: a 35mm recorder with a ¼-inch tape player for transcribing direct sound recordings. The instrument was locally assembled with electronics from Rangertone which could read the pilot frequency of the ¼-inch tapes – such as, from 1961, the Nagra with Neopilot sync. Technical details apart,¹⁶ it was through this machine that ambient sounds and special sound effects were processed. Transcribed onto 35mm perforated tape, the special sound effects – such as a passing car or a gunshot, in other words effects requiring precise synchronization – were synchronized in Moviola. The high cost tapes necessitated the use of the static-magnetic junction, meaning the insertion of a given length of 35mm placeholder film (termed “static” in the Italian procedure) where there were no sound effects. Following synchronization in Moviola, the reel was mounted on the tape heads of the projection booth for the sound effect pre-mix, which was done reel by reel. With rare exceptions, ambient sounds did not require precise synchronization and were organized and loaded in loops onto the tape heads, supported by specially constructed loop-holders. Figure 53 shows the original plan of the facility, modified with a reconstruction of the positioning of the various devices. Stage 1, intended for recording and mixing, is located at 0.22 m above ground level. It stretches out 21x12 m horizontally and has a wooden floor made of vertical dovetail slats in solid cherry wood, an expedient devised to eliminate involuntary squeaking from musicians’ and operators’ movements. Walls are planked with a 1 m high wainscot in perforated masonite, with mineral wool upholstered with jute canvas (0.70 m high) and with 2 m high plywood veneered semi-cylinders. The music booth is opposite the recording stage and is separated by a glass panel. The choir stage is about 0.22 m to the right of the recording stage. Behind the projection booth and the music booth stand two echo-chambers with asymmetric walls and floors and walls covered in foil.¹⁷ The premix output was recorded on a couple of 35mm mono records¹⁸ located in the transcription department. The reels containing sound effects, dialogue and music premixes were then in turn loaded onto the tape heads for the final mix, whose output was always recorded on RCA mono recorders. Then came the last phase, which was one of the most delicate: the transcription of the film mix onto the 35mm film negative.

Although the final mix was initially transcribed on an RCA mono optical recorder (galvanometer system), this device was short-lived. Despite its excellent results, it required continuous and difficult technical maintenance. Thus, from about 1964 onwards, the main optical recorder of the facility was substituted with a Westrex 900 that uses the competitor’s light-valve system. According to the oral sources, this was the only Westrex 900 in use in Italy (many other Westrex systems were in use, but not a 900 system).

Optical transcription is, from a historical point of view, one of most fascinating parts of the entire sound post-production process. Recorders were gradually changed to support new optical sound formats, with progressive alterations concentrated around a single instrument. As I will try to show, the stratification of changes in optical recorders requires us to consider a period that spans over 70 years.

A stratigraphy of optical recorders

Before the magnetic era, sound trucks for direct sound recording mainly adopted Westrex 600 optical recorders.¹⁹ From 1964 onwards IR substituted their galvanometer optical recorder with a Westrex 900, which was a more sophisticated and modern piece of equipment than the Westrex 600 model.

A galvanometer system is extremely delicate and few technicians were allowed to touch it. The light valve sys-

tem was even more delicate and engineers, in Italy and abroad, viewed its main component – the light valve – with almost religious awe. Figure 55-I shows one of the last light-valve models in use in the facility.²⁰ This is one of the two modified four ribbon light-valves used by IR. A business card coming from Simon Daniel Sound can also be seen – one of the few companies in the world which can make repairs and changes to this very delicate component.²¹ This is the heart of the whole process.²²

Other images in figure 55 show similar models of sound cameras in action, in other facilities in Rome. Figure 55-III shows a Westrex camera modified for Dolby SVA and Dolby Digital. Figure 55-IV shows a similar Westrex sound camera modified for Dolby Digital and DTS, with the SDDS module placed between the 600 m reel-holder and the chassis hosting Dolby SVA and Dolby SR-D modules. Here technician Antonio Croce (CDC SEFIT Group, Rome) is stamping the optical negative in order to recognize the starting point in the darkroom. On the left we can glimpse part of the Nuoptix Inc. electronics, today used for sound camera control.²³ Figure 55-V shows a detail of the stamped optical negative.²⁴

The facility started to mix in Dolby Stereo Variable Area sometime around 1977. But until 1980 International Recording did not possess an optical recorder suitable for Dolby SVA photoengraving. Before this date the final mix of the film, recorded on a 4-tk 35mm magnetic perforated tape, was shipped to the London Dolby Laboratories for optical transcription and Dolby SVA encoding. As Dolby decoders were not universally adopted in Italian cinemas, from 1977 to about 1983 both the Dolby format and the mono transcription circulated, along with the so-called *magnetico pistato* transcription,²⁵ re-introduced in the facility as of about the end of the Seventies. This format was parallel to the *magottico* (*magoptical*)²⁶ format, an ingenious invention created by Bernard Shelley and Federico Savina that was used from the mid 1970s during the complex transition from monoaural to multichannel audio.

In the meantime, in 1980, International Recording was the first in Italy to modify an optical recorder for Dolby SVA transcription.²⁷ The Westrex 900 camera used until that moment was not suitable for transformation, as the technical know-how to transform *light-valve* systems did not yet exist. Instead, the old RCA galvanometer camera, which had spent all this time in a storeroom, could have been transformed.

Very few specialists in the world had the prerogative to manage this kind of transformation. An experimental line of modified recorders was made by Dolby's Max Bell.²⁸ The first RCA galvanometer optical camera to be modified by Bell was the one used by Elstree Studios of Elstree and Borehamwood (the famous studios in the commuter belt of London where MGM also operated).²⁹

The first transformation took place in England in July 1974.³⁰ Bell was assisted by David Plunkett. Immediately after London, further optical recorders were modified in the US by the engineer David Gray. In the meantime a second European camera, modified by the Dolby Laboratories, started to be used in the Dolby headquarters in London. This recorder, modified and maintained by David Plunkett, was used for Dolby SVA transcriptions in sound facilities all around the world.

In the absence of an agreement with Elstree studios, post-production facilities could not transcribe the mix master onto optical negative, so Dolby provided an independent camera. In this way the first international Recording Dolby SVA mixes were therefore passed to the Dolby laboratories' camera.

The third European instrument to be modified, in chronological order, was International Recording's RCA galvanometer camera. Giuseppe Biondo decided that it was time for the facilities to have its own sound camera. New galvanometers³¹ were acquired by Alberto Sbroscia, at the time IR's technical director, from San Paolo film. David Plunkett was entrusted with transforming the camera along with the Italian engineers, and it was in operation by the end of 1980.

However, this instrument was short-lived. Shortly afterwards Nuoptix produced a new electronic control system for recording Dolby SVA on Westrex cameras. In about 1985 Dolby sponsored this more reliable system

and advised International Recording to abandon its old galvanometer camera in favor of Westrex. The Westrex 900 camera already owned by International Recording could not be used for the purpose because there was insufficient space between its mechanical parts for it to be adapted. The very common old optical cameras used on sound trucks since the late 1940s could instead be modified.³² For this reason the second hand market for Westrex 600 cameras had a new lease of life, becoming the preferred instruments for Dolby Digital, SDDS, and DTS sound camera transformations until late into the 1990s.

At the end of 1984 the technical director Sbroscia acquired from Calpini studio an old Westrex 600 whose mechanical parts, in particular the drive electronics for the stepper motor, was partially assembled and modified in Rome. Neuoptyx electronics for SVA transcription were acquired through the mediation of Dolby's Max Bell. The new 4-ribbon light valve was bought by Dolby and modified by Los Angeles based technician Daniel Simon,³³ one of the few specialists in the world able to adapt and repair light-valves.

As was also the case with other facilities, this instrument would serve for optical transcription until 2013, with progressive improvements. I will not go into the technical details here, but the addition of SDDS and DTS modules and the substitution of a new reel mount when 600 m reels came in are worth pointing out. As can easily be inferred from Figure 54, new modules were added by modifying the original basis: an old Westrex 600 optical camera. These models were in use until the first months of 2013, when the transition to D-Cinema was completed, definitively putting the 35mm negative, used as film sound's main medium, into retirement after a complex history lasting over 70 years.

This exceptional technical stratification is the fruit of a period characterized by sudden discontinuities and unexpected revivals. The industry's promotional discourse tended to present developments in film sound as the advent of a new era, but a stratigraphy of the devices used demonstrates how "old" and "new" media met in a highly complex way.

The fascinating aspects of this part of the post-production process are to a large extent due to the convergence between improvements in magnetic recording and older optical technology. Even in the digital age, optical technology continued to impose its specific features and its limitations – a fact often disregarded by historical research.

Suffice it to point out a few significant details. Even in the case of a perfectly calibrated device optical transcription is not a neutral process and film development can significantly alter the sound quality. For example, minor temperature variations in the processing bath can often lead to under- or over-development. Faced with constant complaints from clients and developing facilities, International Recording developed a series of quality control tests. One of these involved matching, reel by reel, the original mix master on magnetic tape with the optical soundtrack, as received from the printing facility. An offset level was assigned to the optical soundtrack to compare the two mixes. Any discrepancies may indicate a badly developed reel – in this case, a series of audible distortions alert the engineer's ear. He would then investigate the soundtrack under the microscope. For example, over-developing may distort the waveform, determining a thickening of the peaks that may cause an alteration of the high frequencies, while a bad alignment of the sound negative could determine an incorrect focus of the soundtrack with significant alterations for the listener. There are plenty of examples of movies that reached cinemas with alterations of waveform caused by this last part of the post-production process.

Examining the bottleneck imposed by optical transcription involves exploring some exceptional historical layering, in which devices dating back as far as the 1940s have survived – albeit with continuous integrations – to the present day. Investigating these historical "sequences" means understanding the essential problems of technological change in film sound: when light becomes sound.

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Illustrations

48. Giuseppe Biondo (first from left) and Vladimir Zworykin (second from left), center: unidentified German functionary (signed and dated on the back by Vladimir Zworykin), Berlin, 1934.
49. Giuseppe Biondo (right) and Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi, via Asiago RAI headquarters, Rome, 1947.
50. Frank Folsom and Giuseppe Biondo, ECA offices, Rome, ca. 1948-1950.
- 51-52. IR's Music booth and projection booth, 1959.
53. Horizontal plan of the facility (0.22 m above ground level).
54. Light Valve (serial no.: 50).
55. Chronology of optical recorders (International Recording, 1959-2004).

Notes

¹ Translated by Ilario Meandri and Susan Phillips, revised by Brent Waterhouse.

² The research I shall refer to here has been developed within the *Cabiria* Project (Census, Cataloguing and Study of Manuscript and Printed Music for the Cinema in Piedmont, University of Turin) first coordinated by Luisa Zanoncelli and then by Annarita Colturato, to whom I would like to express my gratitude. Some of the information found in this paper, analyzed here in greater detail, has been published, in Italian, in Ilario Meandri, *International Recording (1959-1969). Indagine sulle memorie orali*, Kaplan, Torino 2013. In addition to printed works, I will also refer to: 1) oral sources collected in 2012 and 2013 during extensive fieldwork; 2) documents from International Recording's archives (henceforth IR Archive), property of Paolo Biondo, former CEO at International Recording from 1980 to 2004. In this work I shall cite recorded oral sources indicating name, date and place of collection. I will refer to archive documents, which have not yet been catalogued, with a general title deduced from the files and, where possible, a date, placed in square brackets if the date has been inferred. Other published studies may be of interest for a comment on the methodology adopted in the collection and analysis of oral sources: Ilario Meandri, *A History of Technique in Film Music and Film Sound Post-production in Italy. Methodological Remarks Complementary to an Examination of Oral Memories*, in Annarita Colturato (ed.), *Film Music: Practices, Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives. Studies around Cabiria Research Project*, Kaplan, Turin 2014, pp. 187-219.

³ Giuseppe Biondo, signed curriculum vitae [ca 1945]. Courtesy of Paolo Biondo, International Recording Archive (henceforth: IRA).

⁴ Paolo Biondo, 25 October 2012, Rome.

⁵ Information leaflet no. 018/454 by "RCA International Division. 745 Fifth Avenue, New York," in Italian containing information on the products exhibited at the Milan fair (probably the 1947 "Celebrazioni Marconiane").

⁶ Cf. Ilario Meandri, Paolo Biondo, "Giuseppe Antonino Biondo e la fondazione dell'International Recording," in *Musica/Tecnologia - Music/Technology*, nos. 8-9, 2013-2104.

⁷ Courtesy of Paolo Biondo, IRA.

⁸ Paolo Biondo, 25 October 2012, Rome.

⁹ When Rettinger signed the project of IR studios he was acoustic engineer at RCA Broadcast and

Communications Products Division, based in Hollywood. The author of several articles and handbooks on acoustics in recording studios, Rettinger also worked on developing new loudspeakers, microphones and magnetic heads and specialized in the acoustic design of Scoring Stages and Motion Picture Theaters. He was the author of numerous projects in the States and in Europe, such as Capitol Tower (LA) in the Fifties and Hollywood's Cinerama Center Theater in the Sixties. At the current state of research, no confirmation could be found of his work at the Universal studios, on which Biondo (23 October 2012, Rome) reports. However, Rettinger is documented as an acoustics consultant who was very active in Hollywood and who carried out important studies at least from 1935 onwards as main designer or consultant. This biographical note is taken from an editorial article that appeared in the *Journal of the SMPTE* in 1966, when Rettinger retired ("Biographical Notes," in *Journal of the SMPTE*, vol. 75, no. 5, 1966, pp. 534-536, p. 534).

¹⁰ Paolo Biondo, 25 October 2012, Rome; Federico Savina, 6 October 2012, Rome; Danilo Moroni, 26 October 2012, Rome.

¹¹ I will now consider a small part of the process, which concerns sound effect post-production. Although I will not be dealing here with dialogues and music, following the production path of sound effects will clarify how the entire process finally comes to optical recorders.

¹² Source: photostatic copy of the information leaflet of CNAIAF manufacturing company, Courtesy of Paolo Biondo, IRA.

¹³ The transition to solid state Ampex units and the constructions of new solid state devices began at the end of the 1960s, under the technical direction of Bernard Shelley and with the collaboration of Federico Savina, at that time music scoring mixer, and Alberto Sbroscia, Shelley's assistant and later technical director of the facility.

¹⁴ Paolo Biondo, 25 October 2012, Rome; Federico Savina, 6 October 2012, Rome; Danilo Moroni, 26 October 2012, Rome; Alberto Sbroscia, 27 September 2012, Rome.

¹⁵ From between 1963 and 1964 Langevin 7-band equalizers were also in use.

¹⁶ Oral sources are contradictory on this point: some claim that the device was assembled by the Swiss Perfectone, but there is a clear resemblance with the name of the company founded by colonel Ranger, initially a competitor of Ampex. Rangertone specialized in the mid 1950s in the construction and proposal of various systems for synchronizing magnetic tape and film (see for example Richard H. Ranger, "Sprocketless Synchronous Magnetic Tape," in *Journal of the SMPTE*, 1950, vol. 54, no. 3, pp. 328-336). Perfectone had patented a synchronization method similar to that of Nagra, but with a 100kHz pilot frequency (twice that of the most European mains supply) and pilot frequency heads positioned on either side of the tape, not centrally as in the case of Neo-pilot (cf. EUROPEAN BROADCASTING UNION, *Synchronization of Audio Tape-Recorders with Film Cameras* (EBU-Tech 3095), European Broadcasting Union, Geneva 1973, p. 9). This instrument, as described by Alberto Sbroscia, clearly uses a Neo-pilot-type heads configuration so it is not currently clear whether this was a system originally designed by Perfectone to support its proprietary sync method that was only subsequently adapted to the Nagra Neopilot system. New photographs of the original device, now in the hands of collector and audio expert Marcello Braca, seem to confirm this. The photographs show a detail of an Ampex 350, property of IR. Next to the tape transport control cluster there is a control panel of a module for reading a sync signal. The device is produced by "Rangertone Inc. Newark, N.J." Future analysis should provide a key to its functioning.

¹⁷ Source of the original plan: photostatic copy of the information leaflet of CNAIAF manufacturing company, courtesy of Paolo Biondo, IRA.

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¹⁸ These are RCA recorders (presumably PM66 models). Only at the end of the 1960s did the technical direction begin designing and building a new generation of multitrack recorders.

¹⁹ Similar models were presented by R. E. Warn, Westrex Corporation (New York HQ) in a 1949 article in *J. SMPTE*, where various optical recording systems used worldwide are described (including those used in the Fonorama facility). The 600 system is here described in great detail with photographs. As an example of its portability and ease of use Warn cites the case of the Zurich "Praesens Studio," which installed the system on truck used for direct sound recording in central Europe. See R. E. Warn "Recording Equipment throughout the World," in *Journal of the SMPTE*, vol. 53, no. 3, 1949, pp. 236-241.

²⁰ This is a four ribbon light-valve in use until the mid aughts for the transcription of a Dolby Stereo Variable Area on the sound negative (cf. *infra*).

²¹ Photographed on 17 October 2012 at the Technicolor factory. Courtesy of Fabrizio Nisi, Technicolor Rome.

²² There are only a handful of technicians in the entire world who can open a light valve: as it is the heart of the photophone system, no one dares to open it for fear of damaging the sophisticated ribbon system inside.

²³ Photographed on 16 October 2012 at the CDC SEFIT Group, Rome. Courtesy of Antonio Croce.

²⁴ Photographed on 17 October 2012 at the Fonorama facility, Rome. Courtesy of Fonorama.

²⁵ Since the early 1970s, some copies were released with the so called *magnetico pistato* format (the Italian name for CinemaScope's 4-track "stereo" magnetic sound, i.e. 35mm positive copies where four magnetic strips are pasted). A film's final mix is recorded on these 4-tracks through a purposefully modified instrument (cf. "Bomar device," in Ilario Meandri, *International Recording*, cit.). This is a format Fox introduced in the Fifties which then fell into disuse at the end of the same decade, eclipsed by 70mm widescreen systems (Todd-AO, MGM Camera 65, Super Panavision). The latter formats had sound released on 6 magnetic tracks. According to what Paolo Biondo reports (25 October 2012, Rome), since the magnetic track was re-introduced the positive copies were sent to Studio Barbieri, a facility that managed the so-called *pistaggio* process (*tracking*, i.e. the process of gluing the 4 magnetic strips to the 35mm film positive) which is obtained with specific machines. Savina reports (30 October 2012, Rome) that only Italian copies were used to paste the magnetic strips – which often caused problems because the tracks would detach after numerous runs on the projector – whilst for the American copies the magnetic strips were emulsified on the film, with a slightly inferior audio quality, but guaranteeing greater safety. The standard 35mm original for this format is slightly different, using smaller dragging perforations (CS perforations, otherwise known as "Fox holes") to make enough room for the magnetic strips. That is also due to the fact that, when tracking was resumed in the 1970s no cinema would have accepted spending the amount of money needed to change the reels for CS perforations. The "new" 1970s tracking thus uses standard 35mm film perforations and consequently places the tracks according to a different standard than CinemaScope's 4-tk (Paolo Biondo, 25 October 2012, Rome).

²⁶ Briefly, this is a method developed in IR from 1973-74 to circa 1982-83 which, upon optimizing the position of tracks on the 35mm, allows the transcription of the film mix on 4 magnetic tracks though maintaining backward compatibility with the mono-aural VA bilateral optical format. The magnetic tracks on the 35mm film are aligned so that one of the magnetic strips covers exactly half of the two millimeter optical track: in this case the optical head reads half of the bilateral track, the same optical track being covered for the other half by one of the four magnetic strips. This method helped IR save

on multiple copies, so that one single copy would serve the cinemas equipped with projectors with magnetic 4-track sound heads as well as cinemas with traditional monoaural optical heads.

²⁷ Paolo Biondo, 25 October 2012, Rome; Alberto Sbroscia, 25 October 2012, Rome.

²⁸ At the same time, David Simons, one of the few specialists in the world and owner of Daniel Simon Sound, specialized in repairing and adapting the light-valves of the Westrex systems (the first IR light-valve for Dolby stereo was however acquired by Dolby). For Dolby SVA recording Westrex systems require a four ribbon light-valve, like those introduced by Westrex in 1938 (see Scott D. Smith, "When Sound Was Reel 8. Dolby Noise Reduction in the '70s," in *695 Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2012, pp. 26-30, p. 27). In 1937 an interesting article by J. P. Maxfield, Electrical Research Products Inc., describes the first public demonstration of a stereophonic recording in New York made with a system developed in cooperation with Bell Telephone Laboratories that uses a pair of light-valve ribbons to obtain a stereophonic recording. See J.[oseph] P. Maxfield, "Demonstration of Stereophonic Recording with Motion Pictures," in *Journal of the SMPTE*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1937, pp. 131-135. For a biographical account of J. P. Maxfield see Rick Altman, *Joseph P. Maxfield*, in Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (ed.), *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1996, p. 213.

²⁹ The well known dubbing mixer Bill Rowe (1931-1992) worked at the Elstree Studios. At IR he mixed the Italian edition of *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979). There he came into contact with Bernard Shelley, G. A. Biondo, P. Biondo and the facility engineers (Paolo Biondo, 27 March 2013, Rome). Rowe pioneered the introduction of Dolby A-Type onto the film *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1972), which used Dolby NR in pre-mixes and during the film's final mix; and for the film *Callan* (Don Sharp, 1974) which was the first to utilize A-type NR also on the mono optical track. Rowe was also the first dubbing mixer to work with Dolby matrix encoding onto the film *Tommy* (Ken Russell, 1975) which used an "experimental" Quintaphonic format, but which was in effect the first Dolby Stereo, although it was a *sui generis* experiment (this was a matrix encoded "double stereo" recorded onto two of the four magnetic strips on 35mm which, once decoded, returned four channels – LF rF/LB rB – plus a third magnetic track – without matrix encoding – which was used for the center speaker; the fourth magnetic track was not used). Rowe was also the first dubbing mixer on the first "official" Dolby SVA movie (but without the surround channel): *Litomania* (Ken Russell, 1975). Elstree commissioned Dolby's Max Bell to modify the first galvanometer camera in June 1974 (Paolo Biondo, 27 March 2013, Rome). Unless otherwise specified this information comes from Bill Rowe's obituary, "Obituary: Bill Rowe," in *The Independent*, 13 October 1992, available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-bill-rowe-1557149.html>, last visit 7 July 2014.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ The modified cameras are equipped with a *dual galvanometer* system, following an improvement perfected by Uhlig and Leahy in 1973. The dual galvanometer system enables recording a stereo track onto an optical negative. At the time, experimental use of Dolby Noise Reduction (A-Type – model 360, and B-type – model 101, as proposed by Ioan Allen at the "42nd Convention of the Audio Engineering Society" of 1972) was made during recording. See Scott D. Smith, "When Sound Was Reel 8. Dolby Noise Reduction in the '70s," cit., p. 27 – on the dual galvanometer system. See Ronald E. Uhlig, "Stereophonic Photographic Soundtracks," in *Journal of the SMPTE*, vol. 82, no. 4, pp. 292-295 – on the type of NR utilized.

³² The optical sound camera sponsored by Dolby for use with Neuoptix system is RA-1231, reissued by Litton-Westrex.

³³ See note 28.

Chandelles et feux de forêt : place de l'électricité dans l'historiographie du cinéma américain des années 1910. *The Half Breed*, Allan Dwan 1916 (Triangle Fine Arts)

Quand entre 1912 et 1915 les firmes cinématographiques américaines prennent pied dans les alentours de Los Angeles, on liste ordinairement une raison qui est fausse (fuir le Trust, puisque la Selig est celle qui montre l'exemple), et d'autres qui sont plus vraies : jours d'ensoleillement et prix du terrain. Les raisons négatives pour quitter la côte Est, en partie et en partie seulement puisqu' y demeurent les bureaux, des studios et les laboratoires, sont nombreuses et permettent de mieux comprendre les raisons de l'implantation progressive à l'Ouest : en hiver les paysages sont marqués par la rigueur du climat, réduisant les possibilités diégétiques et les capacités techniques ; le personnel se déplace plus difficilement à Fort Lee en raison de la neige, de la glace et du froid ; les studios eux-mêmes sont impossibles à chauffer et les jours sont courts puisque les nuits sont longues. Bref, la machine ne peut que tourner au ralenti alors que la demande reste à son maximum dans les salles de cinéma.

Mais quand on parle d'Hollywood et des studios, on oublie que dans un premier temps, l'installation sur la côte Ouest a pour principale raison la capacité de tourner en extérieurs réels en toute saison. Les paysages sont variés, la plupart du temps vierges d'installations modernes et donc adaptables à de nombreuses périodes historiques, au moins de Babylone à 1915, ou à des nombreux contextes géographiques (la mer, la montagne, la campagne, la ville, le désert). C'est donc moins le studio qui compte, avec ses plateaux de tournage, que l'espace alentour avec sa vastitude et sa diversité. A-t-on assez noté qu'en 1913-1915, les deux grandes compagnies que sont New York Motion Picture et Universal s'installent hors de la conurbation de Los Angeles, Ince investissant le Santa Inez Canyon au nord de Pacific Palissades, pendant que Laemmle se place au-dessus de la San Fernando Valley, mais les deux pour les mêmes raisons : disposer de vastes espaces pour abriter services, personnel et matériel, voire même animaux (Universal) et Indiens (Ince), mais aussi pour pouvoir tourner au soleil et sans déranger ou être dérangé par le voisinage. Griffith, qui s'est installé à Hollywood, devra subir le mécontentement des riverains qui se plaignent que ses décors d'*Intolérance*, qui n'ont pas été démontés après le tournage, gâchent le paysage.

On a moins relevé, à propos de cette installation sur la côte Ouest, la dimension économique de ce type de décision. On fait des économies de tous les côtés. Économies de chauffage. Économies d'achat ou de location de terrains : une commune comme Culver City offre gratuitement ses terrains pour la construction de studios tant la concurrence est forte entre Edendale, Culver City, Hollywood ou Long Beach. On fait aussi des économies d'électricité puisque le soleil dispense généreusement la lumière. On fait aussi des économies de décor puisqu'ils ne sont pas à peindre ou à construire : ils sont tout faits et gratuits, et en plus ils offrent du spectaculaire et la possibilité de déployer de vastes troupes de figurants, là encore sans déranger le voisinage.

L'installation à Hollywood correspond donc à un grand développement du tournage en plein air, dans un mariage parfait entre le réalisme (les décors sont véridiques en quelque sorte), le spectaculaire (les décors sont vastes et vierges), l'économique (ils ne coûtent rien), et la différence marquée avec le théâtre (les décors ne sont ni construits ni peints ni étroits ni limités en nombre). On gagne ainsi sur tous les tableaux à la fois, mais, là encore, on a moins relevé ce que cette importance du plein air devait alors aussi au fait que le cinéma était encore largement mécanique, à la manivelle, à la force du poignet. Les équipes sont réduites : le réalisateur, quand il existe, les acteurs – le premier est souvent le réalisateur –, le caméraman, le photographe de plateau, et l'équipe est au complet qui tient dans deux ou trois voitures et même plus souvent sur une dizaine de chevaux. Quand je dis que le cinéma est encore très mécanique, je veux simplement dire qu'il est encore très peu dépendant de l'électricité. Les caméras sont actionnées à la main, la lumière est fournie par le soleil. C'est d'ailleurs ce qui permet de profiter au maximum des paysages vierges.

Alors où est le problème matériel ? Il y en a au moins deux. Le premier est le fait qu'on n'a pas encore résolu pour les extérieurs, l'articulation entre plan d'ensemble et plan rapproché, parce que d'une part on ne peut pas interrompre le tournage en extérieur réel en plans larges pour insérer un plan (on travaille au maximum avec deux caméras fixes), et d'autre part on ne sait pas encore prévoir les raccords entre un plan d'ensemble d'extérieur et un plan rapproché réalisé en studio. C'est la raison pour laquelle le spectateur d'aujourd'hui est un peu décontenancé par ces plans qui restent d'ensemble alors qu'on attend de voir de plus près, par exemple, les poursuivants et les poursuivis.

Le second problème est rapidement posé par les scènes en extérieur de nuit. Certes on dispose du teintage bleu, voire du rose pour l'aube et de l'orange pour le coucher de soleil, mais on ne dispose pas des mêmes moyens que pour les intérieurs en studio que sont, en appui de la teinte ambre, les bougies et les chandelles, le mobilier sombre ou les vêtements de soirée. Une scène d'extérieur tournée de jour reste une scène tournée de jour, et le teintage bleu n'y change pas grand-chose, de sorte que si on perd le teintage, on risque de se tromper sur le temps diégétique qu'on croira diurne alors qu'il est nocturne. Les plus talentueux arrivent à noircir l'image en intégrant beaucoup de feuillage par exemple pour augmenter la part de noir (*The Coward*). Il va falloir un certain temps avant qu'on l'on trouve le moyen d'amener des projecteurs sur le lieu de tournage en plein air : on ne peut pas se raccorder sur le réseau et les générateurs ne sont pas encore suffisants ou mobiles ou les deux. Or, s'il est bien un point sur lequel le théâtre a de l'avance sur le cinéma, c'est sur la qualité de l'éclairage, au gaz ou électrique, et sur les effets esthétiques qu'on peut en tirer (je renvoie ici aux admirables travaux de Lea Jacobs et Ben Brewster sur la question et notamment celle de ce qu'on a appelé l'éclairage « à la Lasky »). C'est là mon point d'aujourd'hui : faire l'histoire du cinéma américain dans les années 1913-1917 oblige à faire l'histoire de l'électricité, de sa production, de ses usages et de son transport. On le comprend notamment lorsqu'Ince, à qui l'entrée à la Triangle permet de se faire construire pendant l'hiver 1915-1916 des bâtiments tout neufs et vastes à Culver City, est tenté d'abandonner Santa Ynez Canyon (en fait William S. Hart y restera avec sa compagnie) pour tout regrouper dans les nouveaux bâtiments, parce qu'il a pris le soin d'y faire installer un puis plusieurs générateurs d'électricité de grande puissance qui lui permettent d'envisager tous les types d'éclairage possibles.

Alors comment résoudre le problème de l'éclairage de nuit pour les scènes en extérieur ? Dans *Carmen* (octobre 1915), de Mille avait réuni les acteurs autour d'un feu de camp. Deux films de la Triangle proposent une autre solution : il s'agit de *The Half Breed* (1916), réalisé par Allan Dwan avec Douglas Fairbanks senior (film Fine Arts) et de *Hell's Hinges* (1916), réalisé par William S. Hart et Charles Swickard¹ (film Kay Bee). La méthode est assez simple : puisqu'on ne peut pas amener d'électricité sur le lieu de tournage, on met le feu au décor. Dans le premier cas il s'agit d'arbres en arrière-fond, et dans le second de la totalité du décor construit, des baraques en bois au premier rang desquelles figurent l'église et le saloon.

Je vais commencer par le cas le plus complexe, et donc par le film de 1917, *Hell's Hinges*, avant de revenir à 1916 pour un cas un peu plus simple, une des difficultés étant que nous avons perdu les couleurs de teintage et/ou de virage.²

Comme nous allons le voir, l'extrait de *Hell's Hinges* est d'une grande complexité plastique pour des scènes qui se déroulent tantôt en intérieur (le saloon), tantôt en extérieur (les collines, le reste de la ville), pour une scène d'incendie et de panique, et aujourd'hui il est bien difficile de dire si cela se déroule de jour ou de nuit, d'autant que le point de départ de cette situation est l'incendie de l'église par les tenants du saloon dans une scène tournée en plein soleil de jour. Pour l'incendie du saloon, nous avons, si l'on s'en tient à l'analyse des images, quelques indications par les cartons, quelques indications par l'éclairage, mais pas toujours et de façon donc qui n'apparaît pas cohérente, et quelques indications par les accessoires, notamment la présence dans le champ de lampes à pétrole.

Les indications linguistiques sont évidemment dans les cartons. Les deux premiers sont dans la bouche du héros qui pénètre dans le saloon pour venger les défenseurs de l'église et qui fait par deux fois référence à la « *tonight* », qui peut s'interpréter de deux façons (ce soir, ou cette nuit), mais qui dans les deux cas indique une absence de lumière diurne. Cela sera renforcé plus tard par un autre carton annonçant l'arrivée de l'aube (« *baby dawn* »), ce qui est cohérent avec la dramaturgie : après une nuit d'horreur mais aussi de purification par le feu et la destruction du village maudit, le jour réapparaît pour laisser place au futur et au bonheur.

Les indications par l'éclairage se trouvent au début de l'extrait, lorsque l'on est encore à l'extérieur du saloon, quand le guetteur annonce l'arrivée de Blaze Tracy, quand celui-ci se présente devant l'établissement et lorsque les femmes sont évacuées : on a un très classique éclairage dit « à la Lasky » avec un extérieur plutôt sombre et une fenêtre puis une porte brillamment éclairée de l'intérieur. Il faut donc imaginer que l'on passe du bleu de l'extérieur à l'ambre de l'intérieur, avant de voir dominer le rouge de l'incendie en intérieur et rose en extérieur pour un spectaculaire esthétique, dramatique et religieux. Quatre choses m'intéressent ici :

- d'une part la dimension spectaculaire de l'incendie d'un décor entier, rendu possible par la position écartée de Santa Ynez Canyon où Ince peut donner libre cours à ses expérimentations pyrotechniques ;
- d'autre part la dimension esthétique par le jeu de couleurs, des plans quasi filés de la panique des habitants au milieu des flammes, et de l'importance donnée aux ombres chinoises, pour un procédé déjà mis au point pour les éclairages naturels « de l'arrière » pour les levers et les couchers de soleil ;
- d'autre part encore l'hétérogénéité des compositions, notamment pour la jeune femme devant l'église avec son frère mort, que seules les couleurs de teintage permettaient de rendre à la continuité dramatique ;
- et enfin l'importance pour la recherche historique du recours aux « *continuity scripts* » et les prescriptions données par le producteur et le directeur du département de scénarios quant au tournage et aux difficultés techniques à surmonter. Le document conservé à la Cinémathèque française pour *Hell's Hinges* est catégorique : toute la fin se passe de nuit, à commencer par l'incendie de l'église, le retour du héros, puis l'incendie du saloon et son extension au reste de la ville vouée aux flammes du feu purificateur.

On peut juger aujourd'hui cette fin de *Hell's Hinges* hétéroclite et incohérente dans sa mise en scène et dans le traitement de l'éclairage. Je la trouve pour ma part ample, ambitieuse et plutôt réussie dans l'usage des ombres

chinoises, dans la panique de la foule, dans le rendu de la folie vengeresse. Mais je trouve surtout que le film s'appuie très nettement sur des cadres de référence (la coda finale d'un film dramatique, la symbolique de l'enfer et de la purification par le feu, et l'alternance nuit-jour qui fait de ce dernier une renaissance, voire une résurrection après une traversée à la fois apocalyptique et rédemptrice). C'est en s'appuyant sur ces connaissances du public de l'époque que le film peut se permettre ses jeux esthétiques et la diversité de compositions, réunis qu'ils sont par l'usage de la couleur et la connaissance des cadres de référence.

Mon deuxième exemple est d'apparence plus simple et plus homogène. A la fin de *The Half Breed*, des Indiens, soudoyés par de méchants Blancs qui leur ont fourni de l'alcool, mettent le feu aux Carquinez Woods. Ces derniers sont fameux au moins depuis 1896 en raison du roman de Bret Harte, très populaire. Le film a sans doute été tourné, non pas près de San Francisco où se trouve Carquinez, mais au nord de Los Angeles, dans ce qui est aujourd'hui la Sequoia National Forrest, au-dessus de la Vallée de la mort.

Extrait

On a bien sûr quelques plans (deux) éclairés par les seules torches manipulées par les Indiens. Pour les autres plans, on peut observer deux situations différentes, même si cela demanderait sans doute un examen plus approfondi. La première est l'éclairage par derrière des arbres en feu et des personnages (Teresa, le héros) en ombre chinoise. La seconde est plus complexe puisqu'on voit bien qu'il y a le feu en arrière et sur le côté, mais qu'on a aussi deux autres sources lumineuses : d'une part des flammes qui sont en surimpression et qui semblent se situer devant les personnages (pour marquer qu'ils sont encerclés par les flammes, mais aussi pour autre chose), et d'autre part manifestement une source lumineuse stable qui vient par le devant et qui est une lumière électrique. Deux interprétations sont possibles :

- Ces plans avec une lumière par le devant sont des plans en réalité tournés en studio. Milite pour cela le caractère assez atténué et « parqué » des flammes à l'arrière-plan (ce sont plutôt des flammèches) et sur le côté (comme dans un brasero), ce qui est assez net pour les plans avec Teresa qui va et vient dans un espace clos.
- Ces plans sont tournés en extérieur, à un moment où les flammes sont de moindre intensité et parce qu'on a pu amener sur place une source lumineuse. Cela semble plausible pour les plans avec les Indiens, et peut-être un ou deux plans avec le Métis. Mais on ne peut pas penser à un raccordement électrique dans un paysage aussi sauvage et éloigné de tout centre urbain. La seule possibilité serait une unité mobile de production d'électricité.

Il est probable que les deux sont vraies et que le film a monté en alternance des plans d'extérieur réel avec des plans de studio habilement agencés pour ne pas contredire la leçon des précédents : un rideau d'arbres avec des flammes (et même une petite explosion, sans doute de gaz) en arrière-plan, un brasero sur le côté pour rappeler la proximité du feu (tout en le cantonnant dans un espace circonscrit) et une continuité de l'action (Teresa est seule et désemparée au milieu des flammes avec un homme mort ou inconscient). Je note au passage d'ailleurs que cet examen permet de percevoir, pour moi pour la première fois, une articulation élaborée, dans le sens de la continuité, entre plans d'extérieur réel et plans de studio pour une même action : on le doit sans doute à la dangerosité du tournage dans les bois. Mais encore faut-il s'entendre sur le terme « studio » : probablement ici un bout de *backlot*, à l'arrière du studio (mais sûrement pas en son intérieur).

Dans les deux cas, on a trois sources lumineuses : les flammes à l'arrière-plan ou sur le côté, les flammes au premier plan en surimpression et une source lumineuse stable éclairant les acteurs par devant. Si c'est en studio, pas de problème. Si c'est en extérieur réel au milieu des bois, il faut une solution. Elle nous est fournie par la presse spécialisée dans la seconde moitié de 1915 et fin 1916. A la date du 28 août 1915, dans le numéro 9 de

son volume XIV, *Motography*, qui est proche du Trust, relate pp. 408-409, que Lubin a mis au point une unité mobile, en l'occurrence une voiture de marque Mitchell, de production d'électricité pour éclairer les scènes de nuit d'un western, *The Great Divide*, réalisé par Edgar Lewis,³ scènes de nuit situées dans le Grand Canyon Arizona. La voiture est équipée d'un câble de 2000 pieds et d'un projecteur mobile que le conducteur peut manœuvrer lui-même. La technique est inspirée de la marine militaire, avec ses générateurs embarqués (eux-mêmes dérivés des moteurs à essence) et ses puissants projecteurs de recherche nocturne. L'information est reprise par *Motion Picture World*, plus proche des indépendants, quelques jours plus tard (le 4 septembre) dans le numéro 25 de son volume 10.

En date du 21 octobre 1916, soit un tout petit peu plus d'un an après, *Motion Picture World*, fait état, p. 402 du numéro 3 de son volume 30, de la mise au point, par la Motion Picture Electric and Equipment Corporation, d'un camion de six tonnes et demi, doté d'un générateur suffisamment puissant pour alimenter une batterie de lampes Winfield-Kerner.

Ce qui m'a intéressé ici est une triple matérialité :

- la matérialité de l'image elle-même, hétérogène dans *Hell's Hinges*, composite dans *The Half Breed* ;
- la matérialité du tournage en extérieurs réels, avec ses avantages (le grand air, le réalisme, la nature américaine comme territoire du cinéma), mais aussi avec ses difficultés qui concernent aussi bien la question des raccords ou des inserts dès lors qu'on tourne en plan d'ensemble, que l'éclairage des scènes de nuit en plein milieu de la nature ;
- la matérialité des solutions apportées à cette question de la nuit, en ajout au teintage ou au virage, par l'incendie, la surimpression et l'apport électrique par une unité mobile dont on voit bien, dans *The Half Breed*, qu'elle est encore de faible puissance.

Mais ces points ne sont réellement intéressants qu'à partir du moment où ils peuvent être intégrés dans une politique éditoriale, ou de production, qui consiste à privilégier pour le drame le tournage en extérieur réel, dans une recherche esthétique (les grands espaces, le réalisme des décors, le spectaculaire), et dans une manifeste compétition entre maisons de production (ici Lubin, Majestic et New York Motion Picture, ces deux dernières relevant de la Triangle).

La matérialité est double : de l'image, des conditions de production. Pour être correctement décrite et comprise, l'image ne doit pas être traitée comme un tout, comme une portion unique d'espace, comme une scène, mais bien comme une composition, un ensemble hétérogène fabriqué à partir d'éléments différents (notamment sur le plan de l'éclairage), ce que seule une vision photogramme par photogramme, avec arrêt sur l'image, et une vision répétée de cette suite de photogrammes, permet de voir et d'analyser. Cette matérialité doit d'abord être saisie dans ses différences, dans ses hiatus pour qu'il soit possible d'en rendre compte. Cette matérialité de l'image doit nous conduire à la matérialité des conditions de production : quel type d'éclairage, situé où dans le champ et où dans le hors-cadre, quel lieu (extérieur réel ou studio) ? On voit ainsi que le lieu où dansent les Indiens n'est pas le même que celui où le héros, incarné par Douglas Fairbanks, vient rechercher la femme prise dans les flammes. On voit aussi ce qui peut relever de la surimpression (flammes au premier plan, additionnelles) dans un procédé déjà rôdé à l'époque (on retrouve cela dans *Hoo Doo Ann*, 1916, pour le label Fine Arts, dans la scène de l'incendie de la pension), ou de l'apport d'un éclairage électrique frontal (rare et nouveau à l'époque), de sorte qu'on arrive à avoir dans le même cadre un feu à l'arrière, des flammes à l'avant (surimpression) et une source lumineuse électrique par le devant, les secondes masquant l'artifice de la troisième (et vice-versa). On voit alors comment certaines exigences (tournage en extérieur réel pour le réalisme et pour le spectaculaire) entrent en contradiction avec d'autres exigences (la sécurité à assurer à une vedette qui ne peut être blessée) et comment se forme un compromis au service de la dimension héroïque du personnage incarné par la vedette.

Chandelles et feux de forêt

Notes

¹ Le tournage a commencé le 4 septembre 1915, s'est terminé le 26 octobre. La copie a été envoyée à l'Est le 4 janvier 1916 et le film a été distribué le 6 février.

² J'ai travaillé sur le report numérique de la copie conservée par la Cinémathèque française, où les cartons sont largement amputés. Il existe une version complète sur YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Siwap-7X8Dk>) avec l'intégralité des cartons et un teintage uniformément ambre.

³ Le film sort le 20 décembre 1915.

Images fixes, cadre mobile. Fantômes de cinéma dans la bande dessinée expérimentale contemporaine

À la mémoire de Daniel Higny

Paru en 2010 aux Éditions Sarbacane, *Travelling Square District* du jeune dessinateur belge Greg Shaw fait figure d'OVNI dans le champ de la bande dessinée contemporaine. Librement inspiré par les travaux de l'OuBaPo (Ouvroir de Bande Dessinée Potentielle),¹ Shaw a composé un album singulier à plus d'un égard : singulier, tout d'abord, en ce qu'il se présente comme une méditation approfondie autour de la figure du carré, laquelle détermine non seulement le format même de l'ouvrage, mais aussi l'architecture de chaque page et le cadre de chaque case ; singulier, plus encore, en ce que l'album tient tout entier dans sa première de couverture, image proprement matricielle délimitant un périmètre au-delà duquel le point de vue jamais ne s'aventurera. Au départ de cette couverture, l'œuvre se déploie en fonction d'une bipolarité très concertée, faisant alterner description et narration.

Les planches à fonction descriptive se construisent systématiquement en 4 x 4 cases. Muettes, elles visent à actualiser une translation, une mise en mouvement continue du cadre (c'est le « travelling » auquel le titre de l'ouvrage fait allusion) ayant pour fonction, non seulement de détailler le vaste paysage urbain figuré sur la couverture de l'album (gratte-ciel, tours, pont métallique, quais, etc.),² mais aussi et surtout de relier entre eux les différents sites où l'intrigue, de nature essentiellement policière, va progressivement se nouer. Placées elles aussi en regard les unes des autres, les planches à vocation narrative se structurent quant à elles en 2x2 carrés de plus grande taille, chaque case occupant une surface qui correspond exactement à 4 carrés plus petits. Amenées à la faveur d'un travelling avant ou d'un zoom effectué sur la dernière case de la planche descriptive qui les précède, elles privilégient, en règle générale, le plan large et fixe : elles ont en propre d'accueillir en leur sein, comme il se doit, les personnages principaux (« Le mari, la femme, les flics, l'amant »),³ leurs actes et leurs conversations. Toute la dynamique de l'œuvre tient dans ce battement systématisé entre description et narration, entre travelling et plan fixe, entre mutité et prise de parole, etc.

Attardons-nous à présent sur les pages inaugurales de l'œuvre. Sur la planche liminaire (fig. 56), le premier événement visuel n'est pas une case, mais bien un pictogramme logé dans la marge de gauche. Il s'agit en l'occur-

rence d'un triangle équilatéral noir disposé sur l'un de ses angles, pointé en direction de la droite, vers la première case de la page. Seule forme de son espèce sur cette première planche, ce pictogramme s'offre comme l'équivalent conventionnel d'une flèche et s'investit dès lors d'une fonction essentiellement déictique.

À ce moment précis de la lecture, cette forme singulière s'est déjà imposée à l'observateur à deux reprises et de deux façons distinctes. Une première occurrence s'en laisse repérer sur la couverture même du volume, en haut à gauche, juste à côté du titre étalé en lettres capitales. Au triangle opaque, s'adjoint en la circonstance, localisée sur sa droite, une forme carrée transparente, un cadre bordé de noir enfermant une portion de ciel que zèbre un fragment de nuage. Ce sont là deux formes extradiégétiques apposées à la surface même de la couverture et situées en un lieu hautement stratégique, dans l'entourage immédiat du point d'aimantation que représente le plus souvent l'intitulé d'un album. En termes de mise en page, les deux formes se voient en outre soumises à la même opération de centrage que celle qui affecte l'écrit : tout se passe en l'occurrence comme si le triangle et le carré étaient en quelque sorte *compris*, intégrés dans l'intitulé même de l'œuvre, manière de leur assurer une visibilité en dépit de leur petite taille relativement à la surface sur laquelle ils viennent s'incruster.

Le couple triangle/carré fait sa réapparition sur la couverture intérieure du volume, dans la même zone de la page. C'est le même panorama urbain qui se figure, mais cette fois drapé d'un voile d'obscurité, comme filtré par une manière de nuit américaine. Seule une infime portion de cet espace échappe à l'obscurcissement : c'est précisément le fragment de ciel encadré dès l'image de couverture, ici représenté en surbrillance. Du carré, l'encadrement noir a disparu, devenu inutile en raison de la pénombre ambiante. Quant au triangle, il est passé du noir au beige, pour mieux se détacher, par contraste, de l'environnement sur le fond duquel il prend place. Si le titre de l'œuvre et le nom de son auteur ont disparu, cela ne signifie pas pour autant que cette page intermédiaire soit vierge de toute mention écrite. Juste avant le triangle et dans la même couleur que lui, se dévoile un verbe conjugué à l'impératif et typographié en lettres capitales.

« START » : cet élément scriptural n'est de l'ordre ni du phylactère, ni du récitatif. Il s'agirait plutôt d'une adresse directe, d'une injonction formulée à l'endroit du lecteur, par l'office de laquelle se voit désigné le point de départ d'un procès en passe de s'inaugurer. Il est à noter qu'entre le mot « START » et le pictogramme triangulaire, la redondance n'est qu'apparente. Alors que l'élément verbal signale un début, le pictogramme qui lui est associé signifierait plutôt, par référence à la signalétique audiovisuelle, le fait de « jouer » (« PLAY » plutôt que « START »). Or, un lecteur ne « joue » jamais véritablement une bande dessinée (comme il « jouerait » un disque ou un dvd). C'est là d'emblée le signe de ce que l'album de Shaw se fera le lieu d'effets renvoyant à des pratiques spécifiques, associées aux images en mouvement (cinéma, vidéo). En pareil contexte, l'alliance du triangle et du carré a du reste quelque chose de potentiellement ironique, puisque le carré, dans la signalétique en question, signifie précisément l'arrêt. Ce que ces deux pictogrammes conjoints nous donnent d'emblée à penser, c'est le paradoxe d'un processus aussitôt interrompu qu'enclenché.

À l'invitation de Shaw, commençons, jouons et regardons de plus près la première page du volume. Les termes du défi que s'impose l'auteur (et qu'il impose du même coup à son lecteur) apparaissent d'emblée en toute clarté : en la circonstance, comment envisager de figurer un mouvement continu et régulier du cadre à partir d'images fixes ? C'est là, on s'en souvient, une question rencontrée jadis, à plus petite échelle, par Régis Franc dans *Intérieurs* (1979), œuvre basée sur un panoramique circulaire ininterrompu.⁴ À cet égard, Shaw ne donne d'ailleurs pas dans la facilité. Pour initier son lecteur au dispositif du cadre mobile, le dessinateur opte en effet pour un mouvement purement arbitraire, un travelling céleste privé de tout point de repère anthropomorphique. Après le pictogramme triangulaire, signal d'enclenchement et rappel d'une trajectoire de lecture, le cadre entre de la sorte dans un ample mouvement continu, qui ne connaîtra une première interruption qu'au bas de la troisième planche. Si le pictogramme placé en marge invite à déployer une lecture conventionnelle de

gauche à droite, Shaw opère, dans le strip inaugural, un premier coup de force, en plaçant sous nos yeux un mouvement précisément déroulé de la droite vers la gauche.

Comment l'auteur donne-t-il à éprouver ce mouvement contradictoire, situé dans une relation de friction manifeste avec le sens même de la lecture ? La tactique figurative ici mise en œuvre est aussi simple qu'efficace : Shaw fait en sorte que chaque nouvelle case conserve un fragment (ciel ou nuage, zone bleue ou zone blanche) de la case qui la précède. Entre deux cases, c'est un fragment iconique répété qui marque la transition et fonctionne comme indice de mobilisation et d'orientation du cadre, latéralement comme verticalement. Ainsi, la deuxième case découvre et complète le nuage qui, dans la case inaugurale, n'apparaissait que fragmentairement, le long du bord latéral gauche. Dans la troisième case, alors que la blancheur du nuage se fait dominante, l'indice de continuité réside dans un minuscule fragment de ciel situé en amorce du bord inférieur du cadre, glissant lentement vers le bord latéral droit. Dans la quatrième case enfin, le partage entre le bleu du ciel et les nuages se fait plus équilibré : les indices de continuité tiennent là à des zones célestes coupées par les bords de la case (nommément, les deux bords latéraux et le bord inférieur).

Avec le passage de la quatrième à la cinquième case, Shaw se confronte à une nouvelle et assez épineuse question : celle de savoir comment négocier, en pareille configuration, la transition, non plus entre les cases, mais cette fois entre les strips. De ce point de vue, le dessinateur privilégie de nouveau une solution radicale : alors que le regard « tombe » naturellement sur la cinquième case, alors qu'il *descend* sur le strip suivant, Shaw choisit d'imprimer à son cadre une trajectoire ascendante, rendue manifeste par deux indices de continuité (fragmentation de la zone bleue par le bord inférieur, apparition d'une zone bleue plus petite, qui descend le long du bord latéral gauche). À tous égards, il en va des quatrième et cinquième cases comme de l'articulation du premier strip : que le mouvement soit latéral ou vertical, il s'ingénie *d'abord* à prendre à rebrousse-poil le regard du lecteur.

Usant de la même tactique figurative, le reste de la planche traduit un nouveau mouvement latéral de droite à gauche (cases 6, 7, 8 et 9), suivi d'un double mouvement descendant (cases 10 et 11), auquel succèdent, tour à tour, un autre mouvement latéral, cette fois déroulé dans le sens de la lecture (cases 12, 13, 14, 15), et un dernier mouvement descendant (case 16) – trajectoire brisée et assez complexe, au total, promesse d'une graduelle descente sur Terre, à la recherche, après cette prouesse inaugurale, d'un ancrage matériel et, partant, de points de repère plus immédiatement lisibles ; à la recherche, également, de la figure humaine, matière première du volet plus narratif de *Travelling Square District*.

C'est bien ce qui se produit sur la page suivante, au sein de laquelle les mouvements descendants accaparent dix des seize cases (fig. 57). Au travelling céleste, se substitue à présent un travelling architectural. Dans le cadre de cette deuxième page – tout comme dans la suivante –, Greg Shaw se souvient manifestement des amples mouvements descriptifs par lesquels s'inaugurent bon nombre de films classiques hollywoodiens. Tout le monde aura bien sûr à l'esprit l'ouverture de *The Lost Weekend* (Billy Wilder, 1945) ou, plus connue et frappante encore, celle de *Psychose* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), où le cinéaste, partant d'un plan de très grand ensemble de la ville de Phoenix, parvient en définitive, au prix de mouvements progressifs et de discrets fondus enchaînés, à isoler un immeuble et, dans cet immeuble, une chambre d'hôtel en particulier, celle où Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) vient de passer un moment intime avec son amant. Il est d'ailleurs à noter que la référence à Hitchcock (celui de *Psychose*, mais aussi celui de *Fenêtre sur cour*, à l'évidence) semble totalement assumée par Shaw. Ainsi, plus loin dans *Travelling Square District*, au sein d'une planche descriptive, les cases 10 à 14 détaillent une statue ressemblant étrangement au maître du suspense (fig. 58). Référence tout à fait limpide, comme est visible ailleurs, dans le riche tissu intertextuel déployé par l'œuvre, l'allusion répétée, sur le mode du graffiti cette fois, à Georges Perec (fig. 59), clin d'œil envoyé en direction de l'OuLiPo historique, mais aussi, plus singulièrement, référence, s'agissant du même Perec, à *La Vie mode d'emploi* (1978), description « panop-

tique » de la vie d'un immeuble, roman expérimental qui a pu inspirer, d'une façon ou d'une autre, *Travelling Square District*.⁵

La troisième planche de l'album se consacre de tout son long, et c'est là un trait assez remarquable, à un travelling descendant, parcourant la façade d'un seul et même immeuble (fig. 60). Le problème figuratif posé par un tel environnement tient à l'évidence, non à sa fantaisie ou à sa labilité (comme c'était le cas des nuages), mais, au contraire, à sa grande uniformité. De quelle manière, en pareil contexte, donner l'illusion d'un cadre mobile ? Pour résoudre cette question, Shaw se livre en la circonstance à un assez subtil *jeu sur les bords*. Non seulement neutralise-t-il, sur l'ensemble des seize cases, les bords latéraux (de manière à produire une trajectoire parfaitement rectiligne), mais encore s'emploie-t-il à activer fortement le bord inférieur de la case. Au fur et à mesure de la déambulation du cadre à la surface de l'immeuble, de nouvelles fenêtres se découvrent ainsi, le plus souvent en trois temps : d'abord timidement et fragmentairement en amorce du bord inférieur, puis de manière plus franche, avant d'apparaître en entier à la faveur d'une découverte progressive – et ainsi de suite. Découpant la façade du gratte-ciel en fragments continus, cette troisième planche – comme d'autres dans la trame de l'album – tend à abstraire le matériau figuratif de départ et, ce faisant, évoque parfois, dans ses régularités mêmes, certaines œuvres de Paul Klee, comme *Static-Dynamic Gradation* (1923) ou *Ancient Sound. Abstract on Black* (1925). Dans sa conformation, une telle planche rappelle également le fameux schéma de la grille, que Rosalind Krauss, dans un texte classique, tenait pour « emblématique de l'ambition moderniste des arts visuels » et dans laquelle elle croyait pouvoir identifier « la forme omniprésente de l'art [du XX^e] siècle ». ⁶ Étale sur trois pages et pas moins de 48 cases, le majestueux mouvement du cadre par lequel s'inaugure *Travelling Square District* ne peut produire qu'un intense effet de mystère ou de suspense : qu'est-ce que ce travelling continu va chercher, qu'est-ce qu'il traque au juste, qu'est-ce qu'il va finir par surprendre ?

Ce n'est là, bien sûr, qu'un minuscule échantillon. C'est bien évidemment tout l'album qu'il conviendrait de parcourir sous cet angle. Aux côtés de *Travelling Square District*, il serait utile de convoquer, dans un registre certes différent, une œuvre telle que *Cinema Panopticum* (L'Association, 2008) du dessinateur suisse Thomas Ott. Entièrement muet et en noir et blanc, cet album suit les pérégrinations d'une petite fille sur un champ de foire. Cette dernière, désargentée, finit par échouer dans une baraque isolée où, grâce à des machines à sous diffusant d'étranges images en mouvement, elle peut prendre connaissance de cinq histoires différentes (dans l'ordre : « The Hotel », « The Champion », « The Experiment », « The Prophet » et « The Girl »). ⁷

À la présente réflexion, il conviendrait encore d'annexer le récent et radical *3 secondes* (Delcourt, 2011) de Marc-Antoine Mathieu, œuvre virtuose détaillant une scène de crime en un seul « zoom ludique », vertigineux et ininterrompu ; œuvre d'ailleurs hybride, puisqu'elle existe également en version numérique, entre bande dessinée et vidéo. ⁸ Comme certains lecteurs attentifs l'ont observé, l'une des planches de *3 secondes* mentionne d'ailleurs, à titre d'hommage, le nom même de Greg Shaw, placé dans le voisinage d'autres artistes aussi connus et reconnus que Nikki de Saint-Phalle, Anish Kapoor ou encore Jeff Koons. ⁹

Le moins que l'on puisse dire, c'est que nous avons affaire ici à des œuvres graphiques qui sont véritablement hantées par le cinéma comme dispositif et comme mode de représentation. En tout état de cause, de tels objets visuels ne sont-ils pas disposés aux *bords* d'une histoire du cinéma ? N'ont-ils pas en propre, par là même, de questionner les limites d'une histoire classique du cinéma ? Plus radicalement encore, ne plaident-ils pas en faveur d'un élargissement du champ historique ? On peut en tout cas se demander, très élémentairement, si des œuvres de cet ordre n'en appellent pas à l'élaboration d'une *para-histoire* du cinéma, discipline qui se préoccuperait d'objets graphiques que le cinéma innerve, envoûte ou obsède.

Illustrations

56. *Travelling Square District* (G. Shaw, 2010), première page : le travelling céleste.
57. *Travelling Square District* (G. Shaw, 2010), deuxième page : entre ciel et terre.
58. *Travelling Square District* (G. Shaw, 2010) : le détail, la statue, Alfred Hitchcock.
59. *Travelling Square District* (G. Shaw, 2010) : le détail, le graffiti, Georges Perec.
60. *Travelling Square District* (G. Shaw, 2010), troisième page : le travelling architectural.

Notes

¹ Groupe à géométrie variable créé en 2002 par Thierry Groensteen et Jean-Christophe Menu, l'OuBaPo se conçoit comme le prolongement graphique de l'OuLiPo (Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle), l'illustre collectif fondé en 1960 par Raymond Queneau et François Le Lionnais. À l'instar de son aîné littéraire, l'OuBaPo promeut l'idée d'une création asservie à des contraintes prédéfinies. Pour un panorama de ces contraintes (consécution aléatoire, recouvrement, restriction iconique, itération textuelle, etc.) et des jeux formels auxquels elles donnent lieu, voir par exemple OuBaPo, *OuPus 2*, L'Association, Paris 2003. Pour une généalogie et une évocation générale de l'OuBaPo, voir notamment Jean-Christophe Menu, *La Bande dessinée et son double*, L'Association, Paris 2011, pp. 101-137.

² Comme de nombreux lecteurs l'ont fait observer, ce panorama urbain fait spontanément songer à New York, notamment en raison du pont représenté dans la portion inférieure gauche de la couverture, lequel rappelle assez nettement Brooklyn Bridge (sans compter l'imposante statue localisée à l'avant-plan, version carnavalesque de la Statue de la Liberté). Mais Greg Shaw a plus d'une fois signalé que, s'agissant de l'image matricielle de son album, il s'était plutôt inspiré de la ville de Sydney. Sur cette question, voir par exemple l'entretien que l'auteur a accordé en 2010 au site Génération BD, disponible à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.generationbd.com/index.php/interviews/20-interviews-ecrites/1242-interview-bd-qgreg-shawq-travelling-square-district-sarbacane.html>, dernier accès 18 octobre 2014.

³ Greg Shaw, *Travelling Square District*, Éditions Sarbacane, Paris 2010, quatrième de couverture.

⁴ À ce sujet, voir Thierry Groensteen, *Système de la bande dessinée* [1999], Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 2011, p. 71.

⁵ Pour une relecture récente du roman de Perec, voir Jean-Luc Joly, *Détail et totalité dans La Vie mode d'emploi*, dans Livio Belloï, Maud Hagelstein (sous la direction de), *La Mécanique du détail. Approches transversales*, ENS Éditions, Lyon 2013, pp. 65-80.

⁶ Rosalind Krauss, « Grilles », dans *Communications*, n° 34, 1981, pp. 167-176 (pp. 167 et 169 pour les deux passages cités). Le rapport avec le texte de Krauss m'a été soufflé par François Albera, que je remercie au passage. Cette connexion s'avère d'autant plus intéressante qu'une des lignes narratives développées par *Travelling Square District* concerne un attentat à la bombe perpétré dans un Musée d'Art Abstrait (bâtiment situé sur la gauche, à mi-hauteur de la couverture). Rappelons par ailleurs que la double question de la peinture et de l'abstraction occupe une place centrale dans *Parcours pictural* (Éditions Atrabile), album que Greg Shaw a publié en 2005. Pour une perspective à la fois plus générale et plus récente sur le motif de la grille, voir Hannah B. Higgins, *The Grid Book*, MIT Press,

Cambridge 2009 (merci à l'un de mes relecteurs d'avoir bien voulu attirer mon attention sur cet intéressant ouvrage).

⁷ Les rapports que l'œuvre de Thomas Ott entretient avec l'univers du cinéma ne sont pas seulement affaire de prétexte narratif. Ainsi, il est intéressant de noter que *Cinema Panopticum* a fait l'objet d'une exposition en bonne et due forme à la Cinémathèque de Bologne en mars 2009. De façon peut-être plus surprenante, l'œuvre du dessinateur suisse forme également la matière d'une sorte de spectacle hybride, un « bd-concert » imaginé par le Skeleton Band, groupe montpelliérain de folk-rock qui se produit sur scène avec, en arrière-plan, projetées sur un écran et déployées en séquences, les différentes cases composant *Cinema Panopticum* – moment somme toute assez rare où l'image de bande dessinée se mue, non pas en image de cinéma, mais à tout le moins en une image traversée et transportée par de la lumière.

⁸ La version numérique de *3 secondes* est accessible en ligne à l'adresse suivante (moyennant l'introduction d'un mot de passe figurant sur la couverture intérieure de la version papier) : <http://www.editions-delcourt.fr/3s/index.php?page=numerique> (dernier accès 17 octobre 2014).

⁹ L'hommage que Mathieu rend à Shaw peut également s'expliquer par le fait que l'auteur de *3 secondes* a privilégié, s'agissant de cette œuvre et à l'instar de son prédécesseur, la forme carrée (format de l'album, articulation de chaque page en 3 x 3 carrés).

Everyday Life in Fascist Italy Through the Lens of an 8mm Camera. The Nicolò La Colla Film Collection (1932-1943)

Assumptions

Before introducing Nicolò La Colla's collection of amateur films – an invaluable resource to take a peek at Italian everyday life through the Fascist period – some assumptions are necessary.

The spread, during the 20th century, of literacy, and of powerful and affordable technological means for reproducing and storing images and sounds, eventually provided almost anybody with the ability of compiling a visual archive, documenting the paths of entire lifetimes. Nearly one century ago, the amateur film camera first enabled individuals to become do-it-yourself historians. Amateur filmmakers began chronicling their life and assembling their personal and family history, archiving their memories for the future.²

Originally meant for personal usage, many of these once hidden images are now in the process of being collected in archives and of becoming public, with the addition, when possible, of important paratexts such as letters, diaries and oral testimony. Today we can access these images to investigate the past, and to find new materials for questioning it from different points of view and for different purposes. Relatively old images such as those shot before World War II are even more valuable, because they allow us to visualize through a cinematic medium, perhaps for the first time, a complex set of historical circumstances: they are pictures, taken *from below*, of situations, places and happenings, for which the private film heritage can offer at least a different visual perspective, if not the only one.

According to Patricia Zimmermann, "amateur film provides a vital access point for academic historiography in its trajectory from official history to the more variegated and multiple practices of popular memory, a concretization of memory into artifacts that can be remobilized, recontextualized, and reanimated."³

As a result, scholars and, increasingly, filmmakers and media artists, are using these visual sources to redefine continuously, again and again, the ambiguous borders between what is seen and what is unseen in History, or to reflect on alternative, unofficial, untold and sometimes unseen History. It appears that the Cine-Eye of the

20th century, moulded in all its forms that include the amateur gaze, never ceases to surprise us with new food for feeling and thinking, if not new tools for the critical analysis of our uncertain present.

Archival pearls

The recently recovered Nicolò La Colla amateur film collection provides a unique panorama of daily life in Italy under the Fascist regime from the Thirties to the early Forties. Unique because, after all, every gaze is individual, and every life experience is unique. The value of private sources like this one cannot be overemphasized: they are extremely rare in general, and particularly so given the historical context in which they originated.⁴

The context

In Italy, during the 1920s and 1930s, amateur cameras were in the hands of the middle and high classes, mainly in large urban centers. Amateur filmmakers of this social milieu were entrepreneurs, professionals, journalists, artists, students, all sharing a passion for cinema as technological innovation and evolution of photography. They filmed their family life, home, workplace and professional activities, travel and leisure. The case of La Colla is particularly fortunate, since more than ten years of his life are covered, coinciding with a crucial and controversial decade for the country. It should be noted that the Italian film heritage of the Fascist era, albeit considerably rich, is limited if compared with that pertaining to later periods; with some relevant exceptions, sources available to historians are well-known, and mostly official.⁵

Who is Nicolò La Colla?

La Colla can be said to represent the age in which he lived, and the social class that he came from. He was born in Salemi, a town in the West of Sicily, in 1898. He grew up in a middle class family, received a classical education, took part in World War I as a young soldier. He then started to work as a journalist. Genuinely excited by cultural and technological innovation, La Colla was a supporter of Esperanto, the universal language, and a photography and filmmaking enthusiast. He considered himself to be an open-minded man keeping up with his time. In this regard, like many others, he believed in a new order: in the rules and in the "modern" way of life promoted in Italy by the Fascist regime.

In 1932 La Colla moved from Sicily to Turin. There, he bought his first 8mm camera, the newest film format proposed by Eastman Kodak. It is only logical that the story of La Colla as a filmmaker should start in Turin: a city whose very identity is closely linked with technological and industrial progress.

During his first years in Turin, La Colla first worked at *Radiocorriere*, the newscast of EIAR (the national radio broadcaster under the fascist regime). There, he met Adriana, who became his girlfriend. He next joined his older brother Pasquale, both working as journalists at *Gazzetta del Popolo*, one of the most prestigious Italian newspaper of the time.

Nicolò and Adriana married in 1934 in Rome, where she had moved for professional reasons. The couple then moved back to Turin. Their first son Vito was born there in 1935, followed by a second son, Marco, in 1940. At the outbreak of the war, Nicolò joined the army, thus leaving Turin for a few years. In September 1943, with Italy surrendering to the allies, Captain La Colla was arrested by the Germans in Croatia.

The film collection

I will first summarize the contents of the entire film collection reel by reel, in a loosely chronological order, and later focus on a few specific examples. The bulk of the collection consists of eighteen 8mm film reels, which document La Colla's life and his background before and during the war. He assembled and edited sequences, and in most of the cases he added titles and intertitles. The editing work probably took several years, with La Colla coming back to his film heritage and memories some time after filming. The total length of the eighteen film reels is 1,010 meters, corresponding approximately to nearly five hours of screening at 16fps. The films are, of course, silent and black and white (except for one color film). In the following, numbers between brackets refer to the catalogue of the film collection.⁶

- *In giro per Torino* (Around Turin) is a film diary documenting many moments of 1932, La Colla's first year spent in the city (no. 1).
- *Orbetello: la crociera aerea di Italo Balbo* (Orbetello: Italo Balbo's air cruise, 1933) is a documentary on the departure of the air cruise commanded by Italo Balbo, to fly from the military airport of Orbetello all the way to North America (no. 4).
- *Agosto '33 da Copenaghen a Parigi* (August 1933, from Copenhagen to Paris) is the chronicle of a journey through Europe with two friends, including a visit to the offices of the *Berlingke Tidende* newspaper (no. 2).
- *Il congresso universale di Esperanto* (World Congress of Esperanto, 1933) reports on the trip from Rome to Cologne, where the congress was held. It includes some significant images of Cologne in the wake of Hitler's coming to power, and of the *Hitlerjugend* parades (no. 17).
- A film collecting scenes from 1933, including trips to Rome, where La Colla's wife-to-be Adriana still lived, and to the various cities in Sicily where La Colla would meet his mother and relatives (no. 3).
- A documentary on the *V Giochi Universitari Internazionali* (Fifth International University Games), held in Turin in September 1933 and opened with an inaugural speech by Achille Starace, the secretary of the Fascist National Party. It includes also the performance given by the famous actor Raffaele Viviani at the *Gazzetta del Popolo* headquarters (no. 7).
- A film that collects different scenes from summer and winter vacations in 1933 to 1938, spent with friends and colleagues on the beaches of Sanremo or in the Alps (no. 5).
- *Spiagge e piscine* (Beaches and Swimming Pools) is a remarkable documentary, made of sequences shot in different places around 1933-1934, and revolving around social life in swimming pools and at the beach (no. 6).
- *Gita del DAS* (After-work Activities Association) was shot in 1934 in Venezia, Trieste and on the Carso battlefields of WWI (no. 7).
- A film illustrating La Colla's wedding on 21 July, 1934, and their honeymoon on the French Riviera. During the wedding La Colla had no choice but to leave his camera in his brother's hands. At the party that follows, we see that Adriana is alone: Nicolò is filming (no. 9).
- A film showing happy scenes of family life, around Italy (Turin, Palermo, Salemi, Lugano) in 1934-1935, featuring relatives of the La Collas. The reel also includes a brief documentary of the couple's home life, with the cat Koscecka taking the leading role (no. 10).
- A reel including scenes from Christmas 1934 in Turin, and from army life in early 1935, when La Colla underwent his military training just outside Turin, in Pinerolo and Bardonecchia (no. 11).
- A film chronicling the couple's train journey from Roma to Sicily in February 1935 (no. 12).
- A film documenting the birth and the first year in the life of La Colla's son Vito, 1935-1936 in Turin (no. 13).
- A film consisting of edited family scenes shot between 1936 and 1939 in Piedmont and in Sicily (no. 14).
- A film documenting his brother Pasquale being awarded the silver war medal after the Ethiopian war (Turin,

- 1938). The film shows also Pasquale and other soldiers at the port of Genoa, departing to Ethiopia, presumably in 1936 (no. 18).
- An anthology that includes sequences from the National Congress of Esperanto in Vicenza (1938), and wartime life (1942-1943) in Turin, Sicily and Rome. Brief sequences in colour (the only ones of the collection) introduce La Colla's second son Marco. La Colla also filmed his last few moments with his family, he and his brother Francesco both wearing uniforms and getting ready to go to the front (no. 14).
 - The final reel (1943) illustrates La Colla's time in the Army, spent in Yugoslavia and on the Adriatic coast of the Balkans (most notably the city of Dubrovnik), documenting the effects of the war as well as some moments of relaxation. The final sequences show the Italian soldiers while they are building a small fort in the mountains of Bosnia. These are the last frames shot by La Colla before the armistice, when he was arrested by the German army and his camera was confiscated (no. 19).

A year in a film reel

In giro per Torino (no. 1), shot throughout 1932, is particularly significant for several reasons. It introduces the world of the author, a dynamic Sicilian journalist who has just moved to Turin. Passionate about new media technologies, La Colla takes the opportunity to buy a small and handy 8mm camera, an absolute novelty on the market.

Through the lenses of his camera, La Colla discovers the city. He films the circumstances of his initial period in the Piedmont town, compiling a film diary that captures people, places and situations lived day after day, during work and leisure (fig. 61). The result is a collage of fragments, glimpses, visual annotations recorded for the future, all revealing a strong "archival desire" in the author, who attempts to turn the passing of time itself into archivable information.⁷

La Colla films the *Gazzetta del Popolo* headquarters, where his brother works; he portrays colleagues and friends; he records moments of conviviality, dinners in private homes, meetings at the cafe, visits to the book market, along with views of the city and its architecture. He finds pleasure in eternalizing diving and swimming competitions at the pool, motorboat races on the Po river, afternoons at the horse races, and so on. La Colla, who employs a tripod, often takes part in the representation and enters into the frame. The film is an epitome, a summary of moments in time assembled in chronological order. The only narrative development of the film is the flowing of life itself. The inauguration of his "life on film," by his intention the sole document of his life that would survive him, matches his personal discovery of filmmaking. We can guess (though we have no evidence) that La Colla was a reader of handbooks and reviews on amateur filmmaking; we know that he was not a cinephile in the strict sense, but we can tell already from his early shootings that he is deeply absorbed in his medium; this presumably reflect a tendency that was then spreading in at least some sectors of Italian (or generally western) society. The film camera was beginning to be perceived, and to function, as a powerful tool to inscribe personal experience, and individual perspective, into a (private) historiographic narration and visualisation.⁸

A dreamlike cruise

One 1932 scene (no. 1), set outside Turin, might seem to depict a dream, and could easily be mistaken for a sequence in a fiction film. During a cruise off the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, La Colla films games and dances taking place on the deck of the ship. What we see is a real stage for social acting, where quite a few well

dressed *bourgeoises* strikingly express their vitality and happiness (fig. 62). Today, we can guess that this amateur sequence could have worked well as publicity, advertising the wealth and general well-being of which 1932 Italy mostly dreamed. Are these sequences, that seem almost fictionalized, the expression of collective unconscious? 1932, the year of the *Decennale* (ten years after Mussolini first rose to power), was possibly one of the peaks of the Fascist era, opening a new phase of the regime. The cruise filmed by La Colla was organized by the *dopolavoro aziendale*, an organization that developed under Fascism to promote after-work activities. The cruise included visits to cities like Trieste and Venezia, and to the World War I memorials in northern Italy.

Beaches and swimming pools

This documentary (no. 6), realized by editing several sequences shot in many different swimming pools and beaches between 1933 and 1934, unfolds a sociological view. La Colla juxtaposes "middle-class" places, like Turin swimming pools and Sanremo beaches, and "working-class" places, like the crowded beach of Ostia (fig. 63). He is interested in comparing all this to analogous places in far-away countries, like a beach in Denmark. It is apparent in this documentary that La Colla combined footage from his personal archive with new footage that he filmed on purpose. As a result, we catch a vivid glimpse of a somewhat surprising phenomenon, that seems to have taken place in Italian society at the time. The young women we see, often close acquaintances of La Colla and his friends, appear emancipated in their behaviour, as one would rather expect from models or film actresses. Young men in swimming pools are repeatedly filmed as they pose as manly, skilled swimmers and divers, even if, more often than not, they fail in their athletic attempts. Aside from La Colla's purposes and his techniques in staging some situations, we can find in these behaviours and gestures the imprint of real life at the time, which in turn must be related to more general sociological patterns and contemporary morals.

I was surprised to see girls on the beach dressed in two-piece swimsuits. Through a preliminary investigation, I found that the first Italian woman to publicly wear such a garment was the actress Marta Abba in 1932, provoking a scandal: no more traces of the two-piece swimsuit are found until the after the Second World War. Yet, from the film shot by La Colla just one or two years after that episode, one would infer that it was already accepted as an ordinary bathing suit. This observation suggests that, in the analysis of amateur films, care must be taken in interpreting seemingly trivial details, which might contradict our preconceived ideas and provide new angles.⁹

Filming a media event

La Colla also documented significant public happenings like the departure from Orbetello of the *Crociera aerea del decennale* (no. 4), Italo Balbo's celebrated air cruise to North America (1933). We can easily compare La Colla's amateur footage with the newsreels of this important media event (see *Giornale Luce* B0300 - 07/1933). Importantly, La Colla's images reveal how the event was staged (fig. 64). In the official images by *Istituto LUCE* we see the usual military scenery: everything is well presented and structured. In the amateur 8mm film we can see, as in a true countershot, where the cameramen and photographers were placed by *LUCE* and other media outfits. Some of La Colla's sequences depict the surroundings of the set, the breaks and pauses, the star, Italo Balbo, in relaxing moments. Balbo at the time was very popular, second only to Mussolini. La Colla's work allows us to study in detail the process leading to the construction, by the Fascist regime, of a successful event conceived for the media (cinema, radio, newspapers and magazines), with the ultimate goal of boosting Italy's

and the regime's international image. It all looks like the "backstage" of a movie, confirming how the whole event was conceived and implemented for the benefit of the media alone. Interestingly, a few weeks later in Copenhagen, La Colla took the opportunity to film a public electric panel that reported the success of Balbo's 25-aircraft cruise (no. 2).

Rome, "set" of the fascist regime

Another particularly remarkable example of La Colla's production is the film that incorporates sequences taken in 1933-1934 (no. 3), when La Colla would visit his then girlfriend Adriana in Rome. Adriana occupies the foreground, but, for La Colla, the framework seems to have been very important as well: on the one hand, the ruins and cultural heritage of ancient and Renaissance Rome are above all the subject of a tourist's gaze; on the other hand, the city shown by La Colla can be seen as a set for the fascist regime to exhibit its alleged successes and glory. La Colla's portraits of the *Altare della Patria* and of *Palazzo Venezia* – Mussolini's headquarters – are particularly explicit; so are his images of the *Palazzo delle Esposizioni*, whose façade, temporarily modified on the occasion of the first *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* (Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution), between 1932 and 1934, is a triumph of the modernist architectural style favoured by the regime (fig. 65). The face of the city was changing. More than ever, La Colla's images reveal an involved gaze and betray the filmmaker's admiration for the new order of the Nation.

Behind and in front of the camera

La Colla wanted to build a representation of his ordinary life (to him perhaps extraordinary), in which he is at the same time observer and star, playing the main role even though behind the camera. His subject is his life: he plays the lead, while his family, friends and colleagues take supporting roles. While he chose not to allow others use his camera, he developed a simple technique, that he practiced repeatedly and consistently, that would allow him to appear in the pictures as well: the tripod allowed him to start shooting and then come into the frame, while the camera continued to shoot for few seconds. La Colla's constancy at shooting auto-portraits became an essential component of his filmmaking style. A good example of this, among the others, is a 1-minute autoportrait he shot in 1936 (no. 13), also featuring his wife and their first son (fig. 66).

The military scenery

Starting in 1935, La Colla's film collection addresses a new subject: scenes of military life depicting the filmmaker's experience in the army. While Italy became increasingly militarized and eventually engaged in a colonial war, La Colla underwent military training and finally took part, as an army officer, in the war itself. Always accompanied by his camera, he filmed his army-related displacement, meetings with fellow soldiers, and the Balkans front line where he was sent. The last film of the collection (no. 19), lasting about 18 minutes, depicts Italian forces in Croatia. In these images, often overexposed, the atmosphere is rarefied and soldiers' life seems suspended, as a big change is about to take place. After the armistice of 8 September 1943, the Nazis arrested La Colla and confiscated his camera. La Colla's path as an enthusiast amateur filmmaker ended here, and so did, perhaps, his optimistic view of life.

You only film once

Until his death in 1984, La Colla saw his filmic *corpus* as a concrete and at the same time almost sacred memory keeper. After the bombing of Turin on 13 July 1943, in which thirteen boxes containing all of his family's personal belongings were destroyed, La Colla was informed that only his films were saved. His reaction to the news is eloquent: "Don't be afraid," he told his wife: "things you can buy again, but you can't shoot the films again." This statement is somewhat reminiscent of Heraclitus' "you can never step twice into the same river." Throughout his life, La Colla associated an inestimable value to his films.

The everyday dimension

With amateur films such as La Colla's we can look directly at aspects of a long gone era that are usually neglected and inaccessible, except through personal and private visual sources. These are the only means to access the everyday dimension, or at least its vivid visualisation. Images by amateur filmmakers can create new frameworks for interpretation and thus contribute to the constant process of rewriting history. We can look today, through La Colla's own eyes, at the age he lived: rethink, based on this experience, our knowledge of that period; above all, feel the emotions he felt in the face of those historical events. Was La Colla's enthusiasm a delusion? And, in any case, does he represent the average Italian man of his time? He was certainly more involved and compromised with Fascism than many others; he was a Sicilian, Italian, European *bourgeois* eager to embrace a modern way of life. Mostly, perhaps, he was just a little man with a movie camera. His films provide the opportunity to explore an era, but not without assumptions. First of all, we should make some considerations, based on his films, regarding La Colla's background visual culture, his beliefs and his personality. Following Michel de Certeau,¹⁰ we might wish to see home-movie making as a practice that belongs to the everyday life, whose *strategies* are determined and imposed from above – by the industry behind amateur film-making and its advertising, as well as by the cultural patterns of the bourgeoisie and by collective imagination in the fascist framework – and whose *tactics*, on the other hand, are defined from below, i.e. by individuals/consumers. Individual cinematic gazes such as La Colla's (which, importantly, are also free from the filter of any state censorship) are, in this sense, expressions of the private sphere. They are artifacts of gazes embedded in the real, and as such seem to work as *tactics* in practicing the everyday life.

From private to public

The films by La Colla, like those of many amateurs, express the strong desire, and even the need, to narrate one's own personal and family history, thus identifying and perpetuating its defining moments, people's gestures and appearances. La Colla went back to his 8mm films for decades after the war. Some reels are anthologies, organized chronologically and thematically. He probably also re-edited a certain amount of film materials over the years: memory itself is a work in progress.

La Colla's case exemplifies a broad phenomenon: between the wars, amateur film became part of everyday life, entering the middle-class homes of those particularly sensitive to new technologies and to the value of visual memories. The practice of amateur filmmaking seems to play a privileged role in the way amateurs perceive their experience, as they make a conscious effort to narrate themselves and their experience and archive their traces. What La Colla could not know or guess is the public use that could be made of his images in the (far)

future. To himself, La Colla was a do-it-yourself historian; now, his work has a different meaning and value. We may ask and discuss whether La Colla wanted, at some level, to be a real chronicler. He was a journalist, definitely conscious of the meaning of what he was filming.

It is certain that a home movie filmed by a common citizen, for his own and his loved ones' perusal, has turned into a visual source for posterity to analyze, from a distance, people's way of life in the framework of some historical events. We look at La Colla's or similar images as if through a microscopic lens: our knowledge and capacity of contextualizing the recorded gaze. The context is early 1930s Italy: a growing country, internationally accepted and respected (despite what would come next). The images could be turned into "eye-witnesses"¹¹ of a historical background that is not instantly visible. They are now fragments and segments ready to be used in archeological cinematic excavations and historical narrations.

A final question, then, arises: what are these images evidence of? First of all, there is probably no better testimony of this man's identity than his own films. From the historian's point of view, the authenticity of these images could be a keyhole through which to reach layers and narrations concerning a certain historical period. The La Colla amateur film collection addresses many diverse aspects of the Italian social history in the 1930s: the everyday life and spare time of the rising middle class, travel, the media, publicity and advertising, gender, sports, urban landscape and architecture, home life and interior design, public events (and how the regime engineered them); but also the country's modernisation, its participation in a colonial war; and, last but not least, the role of film camera in self representation. Thanks to new sources like this collection, film historians and media archaeologists are redefining territories and boundaries on the cinema's role in the last century. Archival film materials by remediation and through digital platforms are displayed and reshaped in many different forms, first of all to make them accessible and disseminate the knowledge that they carry. Means of dissemination of amateur cinema that are relevant today include exhibitions, installations, database cinema.

To study, investigate, question, disseminate and expand La Colla's film collection, I would suggest some directions towards which it should be possible to develop our current research:

- The contextualization of La Colla's film *corpus* in the framework of contemporary models of amateur cinema at the time. This is related to the question of authorship and style in amateur production: what is the relationship of proposed approaches to filmmaking vs. the actual amateur film.
- The comparison and intertextual crossing of many by combining La Colla's images with images produced by others (amateurs filmmakers, newsreels, etc.), texts (articles, diaries, chronicles, publicity, novels, etc.) and sounds coming from the same historical era.¹²
- The creation of historical narratives as result of a filmic re-writing. This approach allows to present (and, in a sense "update") the *corpus* as a contemporary re-orchestration of the original materials, in the framework of found-footage film production, and visual arts.

La Colla's collection summarizes ten years of an eventful life; it is very rich both visually and thematically, and at the same time fragmented and full of holes. For the time being, I suggest to consider it a representation of the flowing of time, and view the whole collection as a five-hour long film consisting of different chapters. Even if reduced, La Colla Film collection is going to be published on the web and will be accessible to everyone: a rare opportunity to confront ourselves with one individual's perception of his life and times.¹³

Illustrations

61. 1932, in Turin (sixteen frames, no. 1).
62. 1932, cruise in The Mediterranean Sea (sixteen frames, no. 1).
63. 1933-1934, swimming pools and beaches (sixteen frames, no. 6).
64. 1933, departure of Italo Balbo's air cruise (twelve frames, no. 12; four frames, *Giornale Luce* B0300 - 07/1933).
65. 1933, portraits in Rome (sixteen frames, no. 3).
66. 1932-1943, self-portraits (four frames, no. 14; 1 frame, no. 1; 1 frame, no. 2; 1 frame, no. 19); four intertitles, four end titles.

Notes

¹ I would like to thank Lapo Boschi and Guy Edmonds for correcting my English.

² Susan Aasman, *Home Movies: A New Technology, A New Duty, A New Cultural Practice*, in Sonja Kmec, Viviane Thill (eds.), *Private Eyes and the Public Gaze: The Manipulation and Valorisation of Amateur Images*, Kliomedia, Trier 2009, pp. 45-51.

³ Patricia R. Zimmermann, *The Home Movie Movement. Excavations, Artifacts, Minings*, in Karen L. Ishizuka, Patricia R. Zimmermann (eds.), *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2008, p. 1.

⁴ The Nicolò La Colla film collection is stored at *Archivio Nazionale del Film di Famiglia* (Bologna). The film material was investigated and catalogued before by Alice Cati, for her Ph.D. thesis, and then by Ilaria Genovese, for her Master's thesis. Both collected information through interviews with Vito La Colla, the son of Nicolò. Besides the film collection, which at the time was only partially accessible, Cati reports her research in: Alice Cati, *Pellicole di ricordi. Film di famiglia e memorie private (1926-1942)*, Vita&Pensiero, Milano 2009: a reference study in Italian amateur cinema. In the present work, I try to provide an overview of the film collection, and give some directions on how to interpret and use it.

⁵ For a survey of the richness of the Italian film production and genres in the 1930s, including amateur cinema and avant-garde documentary realized in the framework of Cineguf, see Alessandro Faccioli (ed.), *Schermi di regime. Cinema italiano degli anni trenta: la produzione e i generi*, Marsilio, Venezia 2010.

⁶ La Colla shot only two films after the war, which I here deliberately neglect: it was only in 1956 that La Colla bought another camera, which apparently was used mostly by his son Vito.

⁷ See M. A. Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time. Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge-London 2002.

⁸ Just before La Colla's earliest experiments in film, a filmmaking handbook in Italian was published (Ernesto Cauda, *La cinematografia per tutti. Guida pratica per cinedilettanti*, ACIEP, Roma 1931) where we find definitions of the *genres* that La Colla would explore. La Colla can be said to have epitomized the amateur filmmaker, in turn a quintessential character of modern life.

⁹ An example of this period's imaginary recently spread by media is here: http://www.repubblica.it/speciali/istituto-luce/2014/07/02/news/anni_30_la_scoperta_del_mare_italiani_in_massa_sulle_spiagge-90539626/, last visit 24 December 2014.

Everyday Life in Fascist Italy Through the Lens of an 8mm Camera

¹⁰ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (*L'Invention du quotidien*, Gallimard, Paris 1980), University of California Press, Berkeley 1984.

¹¹ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, Reaktion Books, London 2001.

¹² La Colla's articles on *Gazzetta del Popolo* have not been identified yet. The task is complicated by the fact that they were usually uncredited.

¹³ The film collection is going to be published thanks to a collaboration with Direzione Generale degli Archivi - Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo. See www.homemovies.it, last visit 24 December 2014.

In Human Flesh Are Dormant Wings. Realism and Military Experiments of Tactics and Scientific Cinematography (1870-1913)

In 1976 the British military historian John Keegan wrote in his book, *The Face of Battle*,¹ that battles must to obey the dramatic aristotelian units: time, place and action. Battles in modern wars tend to obey the first two of those units less and less faithfully, becoming increasingly protracted and geographically extensive; also, the numbers and means available to commanders have grown. Nevertheless, the action of battle, which is directed towards securing a decision by and through the means on the battlefield and within a fairly strict time-limit, has remained a constant. So we have to take note of the fact that with the advent of modern warfare European armies have solved this problem: to manage an action which remained unchanged, and always having the same goals, in a space-time gradually extending and escaping the traditional systems of analysis and control. This was a significant problem that needed new and powerful means of analysis, categorisation, and study of the new systems to conduct a battle. So the years between the end of the 1800s and beginning 1900s are in fact not only a moment of great discovery of the potential in film, but also of change and profound reform of the State structures on one side and of the strategic and combat techniques on the other; in other words, a moment of great challenge for the Italian Army. This necessarily brought a radical change in tactical, logistical and organisational systems. It isn't in fact rare to read articles in trade magazines by officials who, aware of this pivotal change, express – depending on the case – their concerns or enthusiasm for an era in which the machines “would overcome” man. The soldier, who until this moment was the unit of measurement for the force of an army, is equipped with weapons more and more powerful and dangerous that he must learn how to use proficiently, until he establishes with them a relationship of symbiosis. Italy had long been counting on a high number of poorly trained infantrymen. What worried the most was therefore the fact that the strength of the soldier was now gradually being replaced by his skills. The use of cinema and photography therefore perfectly suited this global process of widening and mechanization of the soldier's senses.

So this article has two main goals: first of all we aim to shed light on the meaning given by the military world to the concept of “real,” and therefore find in this interpretation the scientific origin of military cinema. The

second and more ambitious aim of this talk – which may seem less strictly related to the theme of this conference, but, as we will see it is strictly connected to it – is to prove the existence of several types of war films. These are the following:

War/entertainment films: Meaning all the films in which the main plot is war itself (including documentaries) and which have been directly or indirectly produced by the Italian General Staff (as co-producer, consultant or subject of the film).²

Educational/training films: In other words, these are all those movies that have been produced by the Italian Army or under its direct supervision with the aim of educating and training soldiers.³

Scientific/experimental cinema: Meaning films mainly produced by the Military Engineering Unit (*Il Genio*) in order to study or focus on realities directly concerning the preparation to war or the fight itself (as for example weapons or battlefields).⁴

The main aim of this type of films was to produce more powerful and efficient war tools or strategies. We would like to take this opportunity to focus on scientific/experimental cinema. This is clearly the most appropriate category to our study, as it also helps us introduce the third aim of this speech, namely: the establishment of a type of cinema “aimed at the war but not about war.” In other words, these are films that have been produced by the Italian Army General Staff in peacetimes, in order to improve soldiers’ performance and efficiency of weapons. The experiments (as such they are) we will refer to in this paper, started being carried out as early as December 1897, when Colonel Crescentino Caveglia, while addressing officers of the 5th Regiment of the Military Engineering corps of Miners in Turin, praised the numerous qualities of the use of cinema for the analysis of the explosion phase of mines.⁵ We will not go beyond 1913, meaning just before WW1 because the war represents, for the type of cinema we are referring to, a phase of double checking as well as the end of the experimental period (for obvious reasons connected to the need of concentrating all efforts on military endeavours). Once having established our temporal framework, we can now set our spatial coordinates. It would be too ambitious to expand beyond the Italian national borders (despite the fact that proofs of this type of experiments have also been found on French magazines of the time). The study and the documents I am about to present here are all based on sources found in the History Archives of the Military Engineering Unit in Rome, in the Archives of the History Offices of the Italian General Army Staff and in the military magazines kept in the Central Military Library in Rome and in the National libraries of Rome and Florence. We still have to clear one last point, as we will see, in the military world, cinema and photography are seen as almost the same thing until the 1910s. From about the year 1902, cinema starts to be seen as a more appropriate medium to the study of situations that imply movement. However, for any other situations there does not seem to be a clear distinction between the two media.

First outcomes

The first result that has emerged from this research is that the interest in fast reproduction of a series of images first appeared at a time when the Italian Royal Army had undertaken a complex project of reforms that aimed at creating a united and efficient defence organism, which would also be technologically modern, so as to best represent this rising nation.

Within this process of modernization, in 1896 the Military Engineering Specialised corps - photography department (*Brigata specialisti Genio - Sezione fotografica*) was founded. Among its duties, this department was in charge of the production of: Microphotography, Photogrammetry, Telephotography, Photo Glyptography, and the study of the functionality of explosives to be carried out, as Caveglia had explained five years earlier, with the help of cinema.⁶

As we will later find out, the Military Engineering Unit carried out experiments and planned a series of devices for recording and analysing reality. To this day, in fact, a series of prototypes machines designed for this aim are kept in the museum (which is now unfortunately closed to the public).⁷ What were therefore the changes that the Italian Army was undergoing during those years? The battlefield and the way the war itself was fought were changing rapidly, and this, either willingly or unwillingly, forced all the European Armies to constantly update. This run in chase of the machine, as we understand from the animated debates that were recorded in the magazines of the time, did not only determine the development of weapons and ammunitions, but also transformed the structure of the battle itself.

"I say we cannot deny" – we read for example in 1911 in the prominent political-military three-weekly periodical *La Preparazione* – "that we have long entered and are gradually advancing through a phase in which the machine invades everything." The article went on: "mechanical automatism is replacing human energy in all fields. The invasion of said automatism mirrors life's ordinary conditions, a relaxation of human energies that were once able to make miracles during wars, when strained by supreme efforts."⁸

Italy had long been counting on a high number of poorly trained infantrymen. What worried the most was therefore the fact that the strength of the soldier was now gradually being replaced by his skills. As required by the European military establishment, a soldier was supposed to bear stress as well as find a certain familiarity, almost extra-corporeal, with the weapon.⁹

The use of cinema and photography therefore perfectly suited this global process of widening and mechanization of the soldier's senses. It is also for this reason, as we have mentioned at the beginning of our speech, that it would not be logical to draw a clear-cut line between war cinema, meaning the tool used to carry out experiments (or a tool-weapon), and scientific-military photography used for the same purpose. In fact, both systems are parts of a more articulated and complex project which aims at recording reality through sensitive emulsion, in order to produce an analysis of military issues, to be carried out on an analyst's table rather than on the training camp or battlefield. But, what are in detail these experiments we have talked about? On the analysis of what kind of phenomena are they based? In other words, why did the Italian army turn to cinema? At the time, the operations that involved the use of cinema and photography were mainly concerned with cartography and measuring of those realities that were generally unclear to the naked eye as too complex. For the sake of simplicity, we will try to group scientific war cinema into three wide areas (although we are fully aware that such classifications never allow to draw a clear-cut line):

- analysis of moving bodies: filming of very fast moving bodies, in particular projectiles and explosives;
- analysis of the battlefield: reconnaissance over wide distances (and in particular on the coast);
- analysis and measurement of war spaces: bird's eye reconnaissance.

Analysis of moving bodies

As we have previously mentioned, one of the reasons behind the emergence of scientific/war photography and cinema was, as it had previously been observed in the case of scientific cinema pioneers, the need to itemize movement in order to study it.¹⁰ Therefore, military experts aimed at recording and studying dynamics that would have otherwise been barely visible, such as the deflagration phase of a new mine, or the flight of a bullet that was still being studied in their experimental ballistics laboratories.

They tried to achieve this by using systems such as: Crohore and Squier's photochronograph,¹¹ Photographs taken using Anschütz's shutter or bullet's back lightning systems.¹²

Photography and cinema were therefore mainly used for their ability to freeze time (photography) and repro-

duce it in slow motion (cinema).¹³ However, the technical problems that tormented testers at the time were the same for both media. These problems, in fact, were always connected with the need of obtaining a detailed and clear image of the object whether this had been chronophotographed or filmed. The suggested solutions mainly focused on techniques that ranged from the shutter speed to the lightning of the moving bullet. In this way they partially managed to overcome the problem. It seems that an appropriate device was identified only within the space that the Military Engineering Special Unit of the Royal Institute of Physics of the Royal Roman University (*Reparto Speciale Genio del Regio Istituto Fisico della Regia Università Romana*) had built for this purpose. The role of the university was crucial. Military experts were in fact given a 15 metres wide room, which, when properly lit, seemed to serve its purpose perfectly. War photographs taken with Anschütz's shutter were instead much less clear. However, they could be taken by simply making use of sunlight. The best solution to this type of research, as Caveglia had already guessed in 1897, came from the adoption of cinema, a machine that could be used for potential analysis. Its moving cartographies were not quite clear. However, it proved to be much more useful and practical when carrying out experiments dedicated to ultra-fast motion. We have already mentioned that, from at least 1902, cinema was used to film explosives. What we have not pointed out is that this kept on being the case until at least 1911. However, in 1915 we find farther mentions of a type of cinema technically suitable to study also the movement of projectiles. In fact, in that year, an article published in the *Rivista di Artiglieria e Genio*, made reference to the various previously failed attempts made with the cameras available on the market (they all proved unsuccessful because of the scarce capacity of the film to resist to the friction of an exceedingly fast cranking). In this occasion, it was revealed that the Italian Army had adopted an invention presented by the German Army in 1914 to the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, despite making a few changes to it. The article pointed out that this type of machine uses a 120 mm wide film and that the camera's mechanism allows the film itself to be exposed to light for very short periods of time (until 1/24,000 of a minute per second).

Therefore, this allows to:

- make assessments in proximity of the weapon's muzzle or the target;
- measure the initial and final speed;
- measure the shot's angle and drop;
- study the movement of the projectile as it comes out of the muzzle of the firearm.

This method was curiously drawn from the ballistic research activities of a country that in May of that year went from being an ally to being the enemy (the paper in fact was almost definitely written before Italy entered the war). The advantage of this technique was that it did not need artificial light, rather a white and very bright backdrop, as for example a snow wall. It therefore allowed carrying out these experiments outdoors, thus enabling to analyse the movement of projectiles of big dimensions. It was therefore possible to carefully measure how aerodynamic they were, thus allowing to design more modern and efficient weapons.

Analysis of the battlefield

The development of firearms (a further example of a militarized science which turns its own technological tools into scientific discoveries) and the subsequent and gradual transformation of fighting systems and organization of conflicts, leads us also towards the second point of our discussion. That is, bird's eye cinema and photography, used for the reconnaissance of enemy troops and the study of the battlefield from a great distance by using lenses that can widen the image and clearly record elements that would otherwise be invisible to the naked eye. The analysis of the battlefield was one of the challenges that the Italian Army faced with greatest determina-

tion. One of the main issues of the experimental activities of the Military Engineering Unit of the time was to create the possibility, through the use of a machine, of seeing what would have been otherwise invisible. It is therefore easy to understand why, in the field of war photo-cinematography, there was an extensive research for lenses that would be able to measure the observed field. Tools such as Görtz's lenses, special optical lenses produced in Germany, had long been applied to binoculars in order to allow soldiers to correctly evaluate distances. It is therefore natural that such tools may be also applied to camera lenses. In the field of soldiers' training, a rifle without bullets was designed. The trigger of said rifle was replaced by a release button, and the rifle sight by a Görtz's lens: when pushing the button, the pupil would make a mark on the plate, which allowed to check how close to the target he had aimed.

In France they went as far as replacing the fixed target with a moving film, as we read in an illustrated paragraph published in 1912 on the Sunday insert of the daily newspaper *Le Petit Journal*.¹⁴ The soldier, in fact, could easily aim and shoot. Once the plate had been developed, the officer would then have been able to evaluate the soldier's performance by using the grid of Görtz's lens, without wasting any ammunition or running any risk. This technique was very useful for training soldiers to aim from the coast or from a boat. In fact, from these places it was extremely difficult, if not even impossible, to place a paper target, and very expensive to use real ammunitions.¹⁵ *Photogrammetry* is a relief technique that allows acquiring the metric data of an object through the acquisition and analysis of a pair of stereometric film frames. This technique was instead adopted to produce improved cartographic surveys.

Bird's eye cinema and photography

Despite being unsteady, the development of bird's eye photography and cinema was also very rich. Experiments carried out by the department of the Military Engineering Unit, led by colonel Tardivo, focussed on three typologies of possible intervention: Surveys aimed at cartographic findings (topography), Use of photography for tactical purposes (microphotography and telephotography), Photographic experiments from a balloon or an airplane.

Among the important inventions that are currently kept in the History Museum of the Military Engineering Unit, in the section dedicated to bird's eye photography, are still some machines that Tardivo created for this purpose. They are: Tardivo camera with 50 magnifications (1896) and camera with 100 magnifications (1897) which allowed to take a series of 12 panoramic photos taken in random sequence by using a terrestrial monocular with 12 magnifications placed on a 360° rotating platform.¹⁶

For what concerns aerial cinematography experiments, Italy seemed to have proceeded much more carefully. Everything, in fact, seemed to develop under the direct influence of what was taking place in France, leader in the development of civil and military aviation. In Italy at least half of the first attempts to aerial cinematography were made by a civilian, who was probably driven by a mere desire to produce something spectacular. He was Luca Comerio, a particular figure, whose activities in the 1910s often connected him with the military world. Comerio was in fact very close to the aviation pioneer and Frigate captain of the Italian Royal Navy Mario Calderara, with whom in 1909 he filmed *Riprese dall'aereo di Mario Calderara* ("Aerial Shots by Mario Calderara") as it appears from an article published in August 1940 in the daily newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera*. At the time the film was shot, many similar experiments of bird's eye cinematography were being carried out in France. It seems that in order to make this film, Comerio had been strapped on the colonel's airplane so that he could film the Centocelle airport in Rome from above. Calderara's airplane in fact did not have a passenger's seat. Airplanes and airships officially appeared in the Italian Armed Forces after that year, meaning in 1910.¹⁷

It seems that experiments in the field of photographic observations from airplane and airship started to be carried out from the time of the war in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, fought in 1911-1912. This may seem to be in conflict with what we have said earlier, but we must here remember an important fact: the war in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica was started by Giolitti without any previous preparation (mobilization was ordered only a few days before the conflict broke out. Even though, in 1911 the Italian Army was ready to face an important war in, they were taken by surprise).¹⁸ In particular, the Experts' Department of the Military Engineering Unit made up by civil aviators was caught off guard,¹⁹ as experiments in aerial survey were at the centre of an intense debate and still at a very premature stage. Within the scope of the Italian Armed Forces of the time, the use of the air fleet was extensive and at the centre of heavy propaganda activities.²⁰ The Libyan territories were in fact very wide and the maps available to the Italian Army were not detailed enough. Therefore, aerial mapping and surveys, together with those traditionally supplied by the cavalry, were not only important from a propagandistic point of view, but also of fundamental importance in developing tactics. Aerial photography experiments were many and improvised,²¹ but technical-scientific advancement in filming might have seemed quite limited. After all, at the beginning they were using only two machines. These were two cameras 13x18 with Görtz's lenses, which thanks to a release button that allowed starting the camera without taking the hands off the cloche, "produced good results provided they were not used at excessive heights."²² In *La Vita Cinematografica* ("Cinematographic Life") Cesare Previtali, after having seen photos taken by the captain, assumed that it would not have been long before we would have witnessed the passage to bird's eye cinematography:

The lieutenant pilots Piazza, Gavotti, and maybe later also others, were able to watch from the height of an airplane the unfolding of the battle and assault in Maghreb. They were also able to take photos of the event (Piazza). [...] Lieutenant Piazza placed himself with his camera under... the airplane seat and from there he took photos of at least one instant of the fierce battle. From this to cinematography, it is but a short step.

In actual fact, the problem was that in order to perform a high quality reconnaissance, as pointed out by the French experiments, it would have been necessary to have aircrafts with two seats which could accommodate a pilot (whether military or civilian, that was not important), and an observer. However, the improvised Italian fleet only had aircrafts with one seat. Therefore it proved very difficult for the pilot to manage to make rapid sketches, or take quick notes while at the same time checking the position and piloting the aircraft. It was definitely more precise and accurate to expose an image on a plate. However, even in this case, without suitable devices, the job proved very difficult. It is at this time that we witness attempts made to adapt the equipment available to the Military Engineering Unit to the emerging needs, with mechanisms such as distance release buttons. On the contrary, the aerial cinematography experiments were most certainly not successful, and were therefore mentioned only in a marginal note. Mr Anfosso was a lawyer who proposed to personally set up a film camera on an airplane. From the reply offered to him by the Italian Staff dated 15 March 1912, we gather that similar experiments had in actual fact been carried out, but had had unsuccessful outcomes and had therefore already been dropped.²³ Films taken from flying airships seem to have proven more successful. The balloon was in fact more stable and it also allowed to move more slowly as required by the weight and the performance of film cameras of the time. In fact, even though the airplane could fly closer to the ground, it also penalized the view. There were two reasons behind this: excessive speed²⁴ and the uncomfortable position of the observer. In fact, the only known positive experiment of bird's eye cinematography carried out during this war, was filmed from an airship. It was filmed in the morning of the 20 March 1912 on the enemy battlefield of Fu Suani Ben Aden (not before having dropped 37 bombs from a height of 1,300/1,440 metres) by captain Emilio Scelsi who led the entire airship fleet. It is however difficult to determine if the movie had been filmed with cameras

owned by the Military Engineering Unit. An article published in *La Stampa* the following day testifies that the film had been shot by the officer himself "with his own film camera."²⁵ However, the archived documents concerning airship fleet there do not confirm this. It is evident that the history of the experiments described here is much more related to the history of the development of fire weapons than to that of the medium of cinematography seen as *theatrical cinema*. The weapon is an external element to the soldier with which he has to establish a symbiotic relationship, and it is not only "empowering" for the person who holds it. In the modern world, the weapon is also an object that tends to free the soldier from having to count only on his own physical strength. A weapon does not only allow killing and protecting. In order to be considered as such, a weapon must also have the power to overrule the limitations of physical action, by creating an area of offence and defence that, with time, tends to become more and more extra-corporeal. This is the case, for example, of machines that destroy other machines, of airplanes that destroy other airplanes or airships. In other words, this is the case of that technological war that was extensively discussed in 1911, but also of the battles in which the use of cold weapons is reduced to a minimum, and which see the introduction of various types of fire weapons both as defence and offence tools. The modern conflict takes place in the space created between weapons, and no longer in the space created by bodies. It is a battle that is fought at a distance, and that is often led against an unknown enemy, maybe even invisible to the naked eye. Placed in this context, cinema and photography, as well as subsequent instruments such as radar or sonar, become weapons themselves (and not only in the sense given to them by Mussolini's propaganda) to be placed side by side with the more traditional weapons. They therefore generate an amplification of the senses of the fighter who aims at becoming a *Über-Soldat*, inseparable from his mechanical prosthesis as well as from his reticular technological extensions. As much as the most enlightened officials of the time are still haunted by ancestral fears (robot turning against man) and new positive phobias based on the idea of the withering of an organ no longer in use ("if there came a time when the sons of a people lost the virtue of fighting, or that they lost their qualities in it [...] the machines would take over" – still reflecting upon *The Preparation* from 1911), they still see cinema and photography, during the big side-note of the Belle Époque, as contributing to the education of the man who, as Giovannetti had well put in 1929, not only finds himself with the gift of a new sight thanks to science – "re-educated by cinema"²⁶ – but that above all "quickly mobilises all of his machines to be able to carry them with him as vital equipment." Cinema from the field is consequently, Giovannetti might be telling us, not only a machine that contains a man (as the almost forgotten Morasso saw, in 1905 and with visionary intuition, in the machine gunner), but above all a hybrid device that is partly anthropomorphic and partly *technomorphic* and that, as the poorly considered Angelo Gatti had vividly understood in 1912, is called upon to fight other machines. Because, all this considered, to complete one's self and live the new adventure (maybe also to survive at all) "one has to fly in the machine with all our machines" and transform into "talking steel among silent steel."

Notes

¹ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1976.

² First attempts at analyzing this film are in Sila Berruti, Luca Mazzei, "The Silent War," "Newsreels" and "Cinema Postcards from a Country at War," in Àngel Quintana, Jordi Pons (eds.), *La construcció del l'actualitat en el cinema del orígens*, Fundació Museu del Cinema-Col·lecció Tomàs Mallol, Ajuntament de Girona, Girona 2012; and Sarah Pesenti Campagnoni, *WWI La guerra sepolta. I film*

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girati al fronte tra documentazione, attualità e spettacolo ("WWI, The Buried War. Videos Filmed in the Battlefield, between Research and Entertainment"), Ph.D. paper in Language and Communication Science, University of Turin, 2012. Numerous films realised thanks to the contribution of the Italian Army and Navy between 1919 and 1943 are still to be analysed.

³ This topic is the subject of the author's Ph.D. dissertation (Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata). Previous Italian studies on the subject have not been found. Here, we provide a list of some articles of the time that can give an idea of this type of cinematography: "Impiego di proiezioni cinematografiche per l'addestramento delle reclute" (Use of cinema projections for training army recruits), in *La Rivista Militare del Genio*, vol. XXII, no. 2, April-May 1905, p. 304; J. R., "Torino - Conferenze con proiezioni luminose alla truppa della guarnigione" (Turin - Conferences with the aid of light projections for the garrison troop), in *La Preparazione*, vol. III, no. 18, 19-20 January 1911, p. 3; Captain Timone, "Le conferenze per i soldati" (Conferences for soldiers), in *La Preparazione*, vol. III, no. 9, 21-22 January 1911, p. 2; Captain Licomati, "Una conferenza con proiezioni luminose alla truppa sulla campagna del 1848" (A conference with light projections to the troop for the 1848 campaign), in *La Rivista Militare Italiana*, vol. LV, no. 7, July 1911, pp. 1666-1684; no. 8 August 1911 pp. 1940-1954 and pp. 2083-2100; Efisio Sardu, "Cinematografo mezzo di insegnamento" (Cinematography as a means for teaching), in *Esercito e Nazione. Rivista per l'Ufficiale Italiano*, vol. II, no. 2, February 1928, pp. 984-991.

⁴ As expressly stated in Crescentino Caveglia, Colonel of the Italian Military Engineering Special Unit, "La scienza e l'arte del minatore militare" (Science and the art of the military miner), in *Rivista di Artiglieria e Genio*, vol. XVI, no. 3, July-August 1899, p. 92 and in Captain Tardivo *Istruzioni pratiche del Genio* ("Practical Instructions of the Italian Military Engineering Special Unit"), in *Istruzioni sul servizio fotografico* ("Instructions on photographic reportage"), Tip. Enrico Voghera, Editor of *Giornale Militare*, Rome 1902; and Id., *Manuale di fotografia e telefotografia* ("Photography and Telephotography Handbook"), Libera Editrice Internazionale, Turin 1911.

⁵ "The movements of matter during the preparation phase, for both the explosive and the shell, cannot be conceived without the help of our imagination, which, in order to analyse them, breaks them down to then combine them through the process of synthesis. As for the other movements, which can be perceived by our senses, the possibility of a real representation can be envisaged by referring to progress already made in the field of photography and by future developments that this art may experience in the future. The instant images obtained very rapidly and then reproduced through films at slower intervals of time, might allow to analyse this second part of the phenomenon. Cinema, thus understood, would do for time what a microscope does for size. The first would increase intervals of time as the other increases intervals of space," quoted from: Crescentino Caveglia, Colonel of the Italian Military Engineering Special Unit, "La scienza e l'arte del minatore militare" (Science and the Art of Military Miners), in *Rivista di Artiglieria e Genio*, vol. XVI, no. 3, July-August 1899, p. 92.

⁶ The Captain Tardivo's *Istruzioni pratiche del Genio* is extremely important. In fact, army officers used to bring forth new regulations whenever new conditions would present themselves. For instance, during the war in Libya, following massive and unexpected participation of journalists, the SME (the Italian Army General Staff) published a list of regulations that had been prepared in the field, based on the experience they had just lived. See: History Archive of the Italian Army General Staff, *Norme per i corrispondenti di Guerra* ("Norms for War correspondents"), Fond T-28, Envelope 209. The same could be said for the Directives of the High Command for war correspondents. See: *Norme del comando supremo per i corrispondenti di Guerra* ("Directives of the High Command for War Correspondents"), July 1917, Italian Royal Army, High Command - press office. The existence of a booklet dedicated to

military photography (in particular, bird's eye view photography), did not only prove that the new sector was operating, but also, to a certain extent, the undeniable importance of the sector's work.

⁷ The History and Culture Institute of the Italian Military Engineering Special Unit, is currently closed. Its opening was celebrated on 13 February 1906 (under the name of Museum of the Italian Military Engineering Special Unit) after a four-year period during which material had been collected. It is an office of the Ministry of Defense and in particular of the Inspectorate of the Italian Military Engineering Special Unit and it is organized around four sectors: the direction, the museum of the Military Engineering Special Unit, the library and archives of the Military Engineering Special Unit. It also hosts the iconography and history archive (since the 16th century), the historical documents archive (since the 16th century) and the historical photography archive, which includes about 20,000 plates. See: Enrico Vignes, *L'istituto storico e di cultura dell'arma del Genio* ("The History and Culture Institute of the Italian Military Engineering Special Unit"), in Alberto Arpino, Antonello Biagini, Francesca Grispo (eds.), *Le fonti per la storia militare in età contemporanea* ("The sources of military history in contemporary era"), Atti del III seminario, Roma, 16-17 dicembre 1988, Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici, Rome 1988, pp. 29-32. We here point out that the photographic patrimony we had access to shortly before the archive closed down, did not seem to include cinema in any way. As regards the photographic material, this included shots taken in order to document events by the Italian Military Engineering Special Unit in the course of its various undertakings (Diggers, Telegraph Operators, Non-Permanent Militia forces and Armoured Trains Unit). The museum is currently closed to the public due to restoration and maintenance works. However, it still hosts a section dedicated to bird's eye view photography. In addition to some photos taken in Rome, Parma, Ravenna, Pompei and Bengasi, it also exhibits numerous photographic devices.

⁸ c.m., "La fanteria alle grandi manovre" (Infantry's Grand Manoeuvres), in *La Preparazione*, vol. III, no. 101, 5-6 September 1911, p. 1.

⁹ For the history of the Italian Army, see: Giorgio Rochat, Giulio Massobrio, *Breve storia dell'esercito italiano dal 1861 al 1943* ("A Short History of the Italian Army from 1861 to 1943"), Rivista Militare, Rome 1986; Nicola Labanca, *Una pedagogia militare per l'Italia liberale: i primi giornali per i soldati* ("A military education for Liberal Italy: first newspapers aimed at soldiers"), Loescher, Turin 1988; Lucio Ceva, *La meccanizzazione dell'esercito italiano dalle origini al 1943* ("Mechanization of the Italian Army from its Origin to 1943"), History Archive of SME, Roma 1994; Gianni Oliva, *Soldati e ufficiali. L'Esercito italiano dal Risorgimento a oggi* ("Soldiers and Officers. The Italian Army from the Italian Unity to Today"), Mondadori, Milan 2009; Lucio Ceva, *Storia delle forze armate in Italia* ("History of Armed Forces in Italy"), Utet, Turin 1999 and Nicola Labanca, *Storie di guerre ed eserciti: gli studi italiani di storia militare negli ultimi venticinque anni* ("History of Wars and Armies: Italian Research Studies of Military History in the Last Twenty-Five Years"), UNICOPLI, Milan 2011.

¹⁰ Edward Muybridge, *The Male and Female Figure in Motion: 60 Classic Photographic Sequences*, Dover Publications Inc., New York 1984; Id., *Complete Human and Animal Locomotion. Vol. 3*, Dover Publications Inc., New York 1993; Marta Braun, *Picturing Time. The Work of Etienne Jules Marey (1830-1904)*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1992; François Dagognet, *Etienne-Jules Marey: A Passion for the Trace*, Hazan, Paris 1987.

¹¹ Captain of the Italian Military Engineering Special Unit Pasetti, "Fotocronografo di Crohore e Squier fondato sull'impiego della polarizzazione magnetica" (Crohore and Squier's Photo-chronograph based on the use of magnetic polarization), in *Rivista di Artiglieria e Genio*, vol. XIII, no. 2, April-June 1896, p. 46; Dr. Albert Cushing, Dr. Goerge Owen Squier, *The Polarizing Photo-*

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Chronograph: Being an Account of Experiments in the U.S. Artillery School, Fort Monroe, Nabu Press, Charleston, SC 2010; An., "Impiego del fotocronografo per misurare la velocità dei proietti all'interno dell'anima" (The Use of Photo-chronograph to measure the speed of bullets inside the bore of a gun barrel), in *Rivista di Artiglieria e Genio*, vol. XIII, no. 4, November-December 1896, p. 280. The operating system of this device is quite complex. However, this article helps understand how this was considered more appropriate than other similar tools as it provided clearer and more reliable results when analysing extremely rapid phenomena.

¹² Dr. Eng. Maiorana-Calatabiano, Dr. Fontana, "La fotografia di proietti in moto" (Photography of moving bullets), in *Rivista di Artiglieria e Genio*, vol. XI, no. 1, January-March 1896, p. 106.

¹³ Crescentino Caveglia, *Esame analitico della traiettoria delle armi portatili (tiri al bersaglio)* ("Analysis of the trajectory of firearms [target shooting]"), Tip. e Lit. del Comitato di Artiglieria del Genio, Rome 1886; "La fotografia di proietti in moto" (Photography of moving bullets), in *Rivista di Artiglieria e Genio*, cit.; and An., "Impiego di proiezioni cinematografiche per l'istruzione delle reclute" (Use of cinema projections for training army recruits), in *Rivista di Artiglieria e Genio*, vol. XXII, no. 2, 1905, p. 304. We also mention a short article published in 1926 in the magazine *Il Mondo allo Schermo* ("The World on Screen"): "A new filming device has been invented in the United States. This instrument can shoot 100,000 images every second. So far, the best device of the kind was able to shoot only 16 images per second. This invention will be particularly useful to scientists and will make it possible to photograph the trajectory of howitzers, and bullets of every kind," in An., "Un nuovo apparecchio cinematografico" ("A new cinematographic device"), in *Il Mondo allo Schermo*, vol. I, no. 9, 11 July 1926, p. 12.

¹⁴ The experiment carried out at Vincennes' shooting range, and led by Captain Baleédent, required soldiers (5th unit 46th line) to shoot at moving images projected by cinema operators: [An.], "Le Tir au cinématographe," in *Supplément Illustré du Petit Journal*, vol. XXIII, no. 1128, 30 June 1912, pp. 202 and 208.

¹⁵ An., "Apparecchio fotografico Goerz, per esercitare e classificare i puntatori di artiglieria" (Goerz's photographic device to train and classify gun layers), in *Rivista di Artiglieria e Genio*, vol. XXIII, no. 2, April-May 1906.

¹⁶ Data is taken from the explanatory posters exhibited at the museum that we had the opportunity of visiting thanks to the assistance of Colonel Antonino Zarcone (head of the History office of SME) and as a result of the agreement between his office and the Tor Vergata University of Rome.

¹⁷ Despite the fact that sources that could soundly support this theory have not yet been found, Comerio seems to have had connections with the Armed Forces, maybe through the Royal Family or other channels. In particular, he seems to have had links with the Italian Navy, with which Corona herself had a privileged relationship. For further studies on the person of Luca Comerio please see: Carla Manenti, Nicolas Monti, Giorgio Nicodemi (eds.), *Luca Comerio, fotografo e cineasta* ("Luca Comerio, photographer and filmmaker"), Electa, Milan 1979; Aldo Bernardini, *La società di Luca Comerio* ("Luca Comerio's Society"), in Elena Dagrada, Elena Mosconi, Silvia Paoli, *Moltiplicare l'istante. Beltrami, Comerio e Pacchioni tra fotografia e cinema* ("Multiplying an instant, Beltrami, Comerio and Pacchioni between photography and Cinema"), Cineteca Italiana, Il Castoro, Milan 2007, pp. 93-112; and Aldo Bernardini, Sarah Pesenti Compagnoni, *Filmografia di Luca Comerio* ("Luca Comerio's Filmography"), in Elena Dagrada, Elena Mosconi, Silvia Paoli, *Moltiplicare l'istante*, cit., pp. 213-232. Please also allow me to recommend Sila Berruti, Sarah Pesenti Compagnoni, "Luca Comerio in Libia: documenti non ufficiali di una pagina di storia" (Luca Comerio in Libya: non official docu-

ments of a chapter in History), in *Immagine: note di storia del cinema*, no. 4, 2011, p. 69.

¹⁸ Nicola Labanca, *La guerra italiana per la Libia. 1911-1931* ("The Italian War in Libya. 1911-1931"), cit., pp. 55-64.

¹⁹ History Archive of the Italian Air force, *Cronistoria dell'aeronautica militare italiana* ("An account of the Italian Military Air force"), V. *L'aeronautica nella campagna di Libia e le operazioni in Cirenaica Settembre 1911-Ottobre 1912* ("The Italian Military Air force in Libya and the operations in Cyrenaica, September 1911-October 1912"), Rome 1989, p. 173. On the same topic, see also: Renzo Larco, "Dopo le grandi manovre" (The aftermath of grand manoeuvres), in *La Vita*, 2-3 September 1911.

²⁰ On the 28 September, one day before the ultimatum would expire, a fleet of airplanes was organised. This landed on the field towards mid November and became operative on 23 October. Meanwhile, the airships arrived as early as the 3 December, but, due to a storm that destroyed the hangars, they were operative only from the following the 5 March, in occasion of the Battle of Zanzur. See: Sebastiano Licheri, *Gli ordinamenti dell'aeronautica militare italiana dal 1884 al 1918* ("The Organisation of the Italian Military Air force from 1884 to 1914"), in Francesca Grispo, *Le fonti per la storia militare in età contemporanea*, cit., p. 479.

²¹ At first they used machines that were aimed at different purposes and were borrowed from pilots for personal experiments, History Archive of SME, Fond L-8, *Relazione del Ten. Col. Gavotti* ("Lieutenant Colonel Gavotti's Report").

²² History Archive of the Italian Military Air Force, *Cronistoria dell'aeronautica militare italiana* ("An account of the Italian Military Air force"), V. *L'aeronautica nella campagna di Libia le operazioni in Cirenaica Settembre 1911-Ottobre 1912*, cit.; Captain Tardivo, "Fotografia e telefotografia militare dall'aeroplano e dal dirigibile" (Military Photography and Telephotography from airplanes and airships), in *Rivista di Artiglieria e Genio*, vol. XXIX, no. 2, April 1912.

²³ History Archive of the Italian Military Air Force, Fond L-8, Folder 224, envelope 2, "Letter by the lawyer Anfosso to General Caneva concerning the idea of installing a cinema device on aircrafts in order to get better reconnaissance," 15 March 1912.

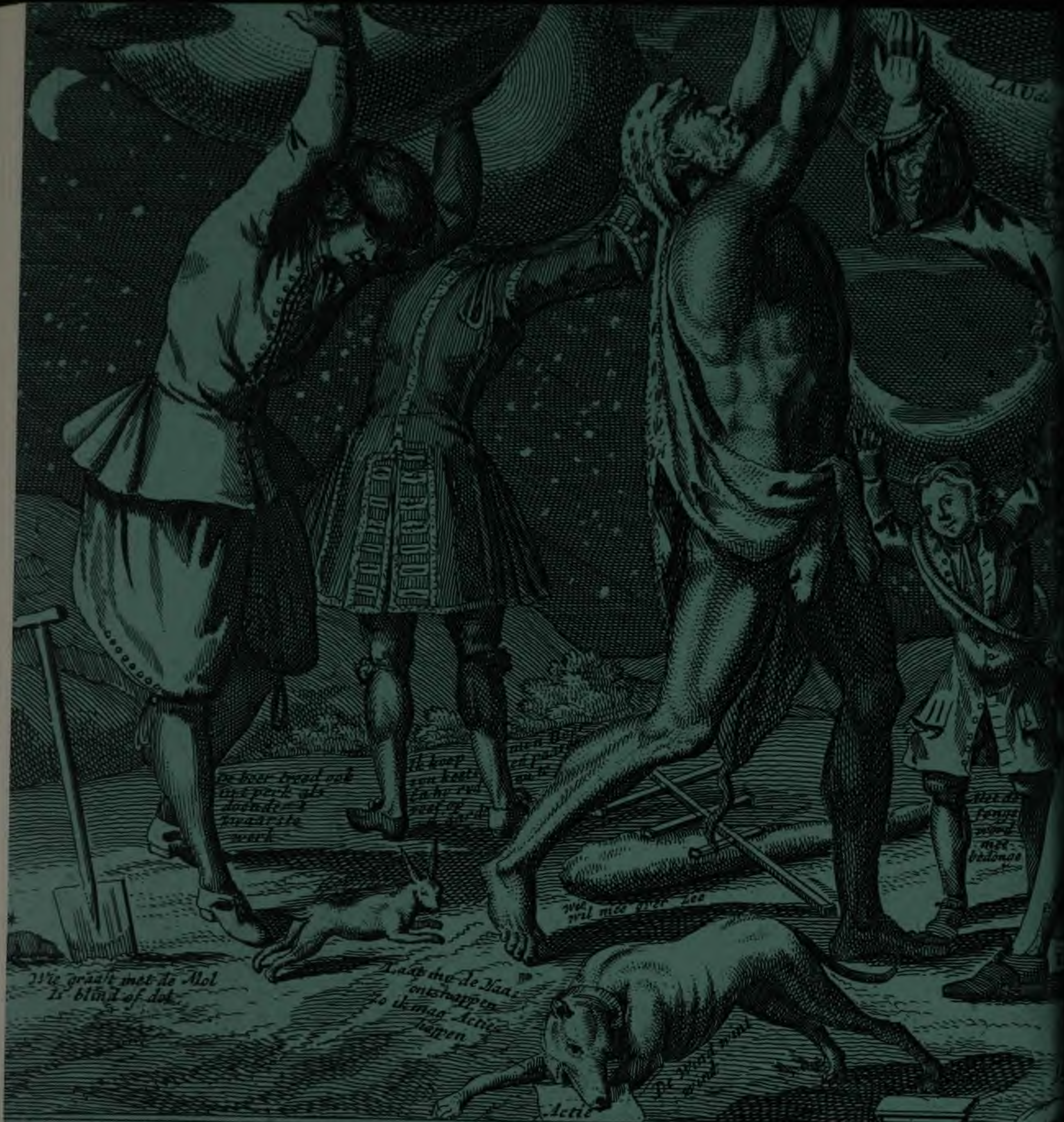
²⁴ Epsilon, "L'impiego dei dirigibili nelle grandi manovre" (The Use of Airships in Grand Manoeuvres), in *La Preparazione*, vol. III, no. 103, 5-6 September 1911.

²⁵ Giovanni Corvetto, "La nuova crociera dei dirigibili sugli accampamenti nemici di Suani Ben Aden" (The new fleet of airships over the enemy camps of Suani and Ben Aden), in *La Stampa*, 21 March 1912, p. 1.

²⁶ Ettore Giovannetti, "La letteratura cinetecnica," in *Il Giornale d'Italia*, 5 January 1929, p. 3. Also in Id., *Il cinema e le arti meccaniche*, Sandron, Palermo 1930, p. 39.

at the borders of (film) history





ACTIEUSE papiere ATLAS naar de Mode met zyn Na-sleep; of t KEGELSPEL des klynen TYDS

Houw: Koning Atlas, uw Papiere Majesteit
ermooit zich niet, alleen zo zwaar een last te draagen
Hercules helpe u dit achtste wonder schraagen
Alschoon 't maar is papier (of wind in dese tyd
enaamt) het is nochtans de wigtigste aller lasten;
om 't in koop by Goud ver de eev' naar overhaald:
of zo Bombario van trouw en eer verdwaald
laat neermaats naar de hel de schaal van zulke gasten.
Men ziet, behalven u en my, Heer Atlas nog
laast alle soorten van personen de Atlas speelen;
jong, oud; myd, vrow; knecht Heer loos dwaas, ja alle dolen
es Waerelds zullen licht aanvaarden dit bedrog)

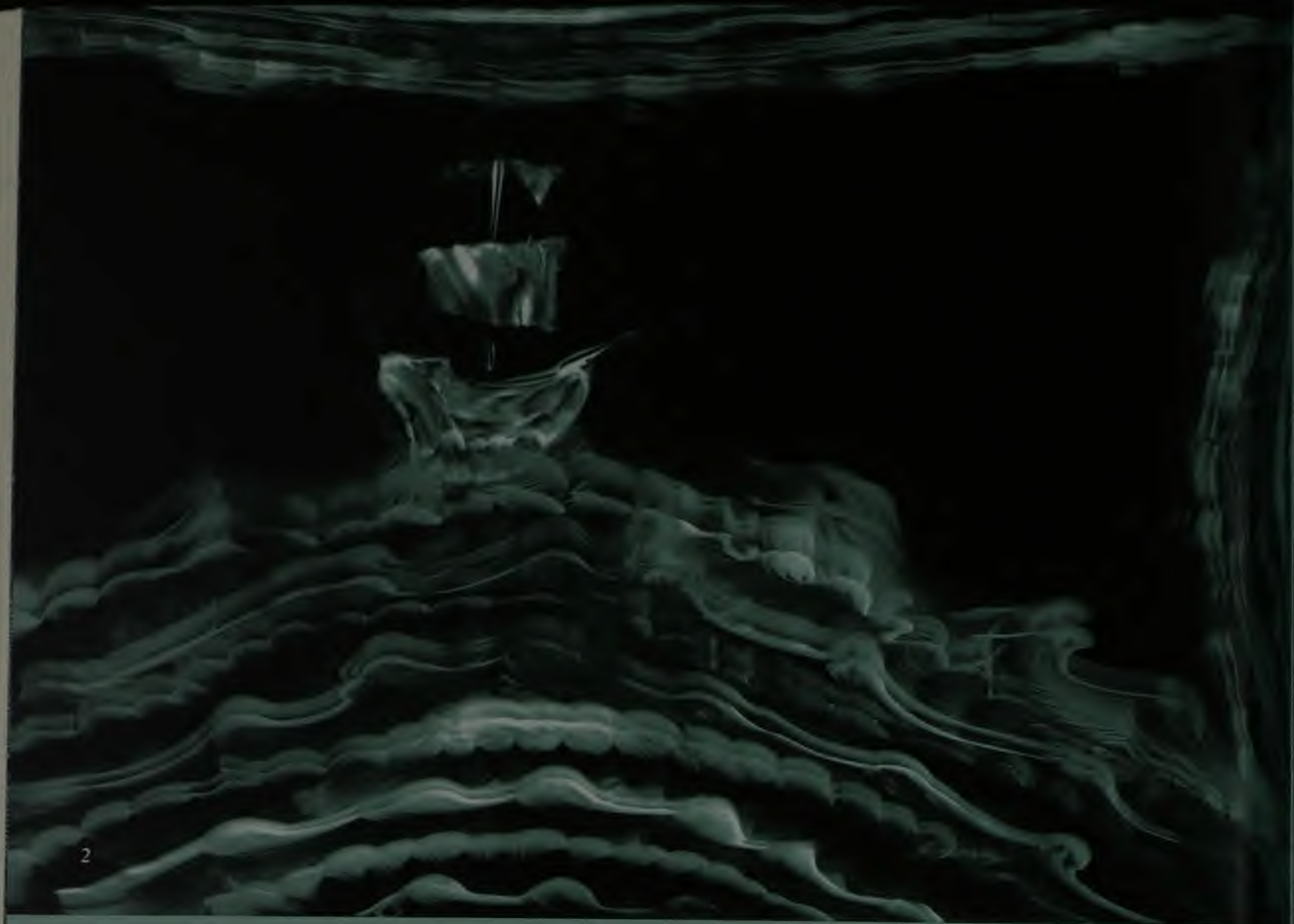
Zelf boeren poepen, ook straatloopers, pluggoen, hoer-
Dat sommige Overigheen niet styven dese list
Is 't beste tegengift van Quincampoise twist
Welks schotse rykdom of gebrek kan de aard beroven
'k wil 't vergelijken by een kegelspel, waar van
Men onverwacht nog zal de tyd zien zegenpraalen
Hy heeft geen weerparty, mitsdien zy alle dwaalen
Die hem niet nagaan, die de dood doet in de ban
Geld-wolven! wilt gy dan de heele Waereld laden
Op uwe rachten, om de slinke rykdoms last
Op u dees windhond, die de haas laat waaren, past
Of kan u met die* moleen duistere schat verzaaden

Vegen nooit van Hagen verbaard
Hoe se addeord of multiplicieerd
Zo wyltrecht zyn oec de zotten die met g' sa-
men vetten

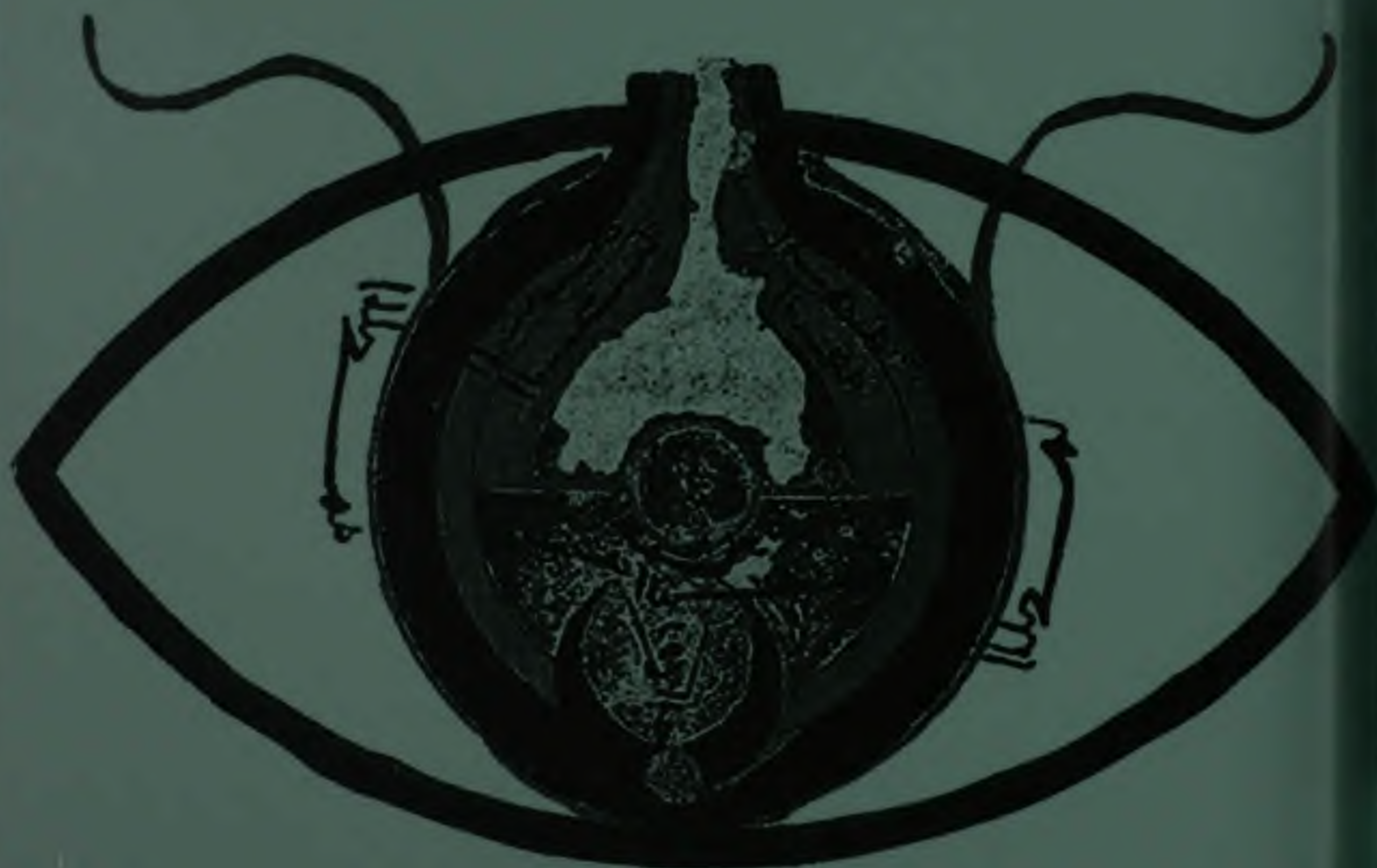


9
 18
 27
 36
 45
 54
 63
 72
 81
 90
 99
 108
 117

L'ATLAS ACTIEUX de Papier à la Mode, avec ses complices et le Jeu de Quille du petit TEM
 Roi Atlas, he! pourquoi te fatiguer ainsi?
 Permetts qu'Hercule vienne, et te donne assistance
 Et t'aide à soutenir ton charge d'importance
 Quoi qu'on dit, c'est papier ou du vent aujourd'hui.
 Il n'y a en ce temps d'espece si pesante;
 Puis qu'en troc et trafic il pèse plus que d'or:
 Ou; si Bombario enleve le Tresor
 On achète pour l'or l'infamie mechante
 Ami Atlas, on voit (sans conter vous et moi)
 Faire l'Atlas partout des divers personnages
 Riche, pauvre, homme, femme, et sot et quasi-sage,
 Valet, et païsan; le gueux s'enleve en Roi.
 Un Cresus devient tot un Irus; au contrair.
 Que quelques Magistrats ne maintiennent ces
 C'est le mieux contremine à ces ruineux faï
 Dont la perte importune, ou gain trouble La Ter
 Te le compare au jeu de quille de ce Tems
 Depeint par cet enfant, triomfant des Actioniste
 Il n'a point de partis, aiant tous à sa liste,
 (Qui même la mort) qui sautent à ses chants
 Avarès! l'univers portans sur vos epaules
 Dont la Religion est l'Idole d'argent
 Ce levrier^t pert son butin c'est ton panchant
 Ah! te mire à la taupe, aveugle en Actions fole



2







Durch Wasserrad angetriebene Orgelwalze,
Robertus de Fluctibus



A

1. Bonitas divina.
2. Caput Christi coronatum.
3. Charitas Iesu Christi.
4. Calum aperit nobis.
5. Exilibus naufragis.
6. Admantibus gaudens.

E

1. Omnipotentia Divina.
2. Sinistra Christi perforata.
3. Paternitas Christi.
4. Passio, sicut et aduersa.
5. Desiderium agrotis.
6. Tristibus ademptis peccata.

I

1. Misericordia Divina.
2. Alia Christi apertum.
3. Misericordia Christi.
4. Indignum locum nobil.
5. Rex inuenerat.
6. Misericordibus compungit.

V

1. Sapientia Iustitia.
2. Pater Christi transfig.
3. Humilitas petri interior.
4. Alitum vinct et infernum.
5. Obsequio mortis et inferni.
6. Bonitatis effugientibus.

Notula

1. Melodia.
2. Textus et litterae.
3. Cantus vel tenor.

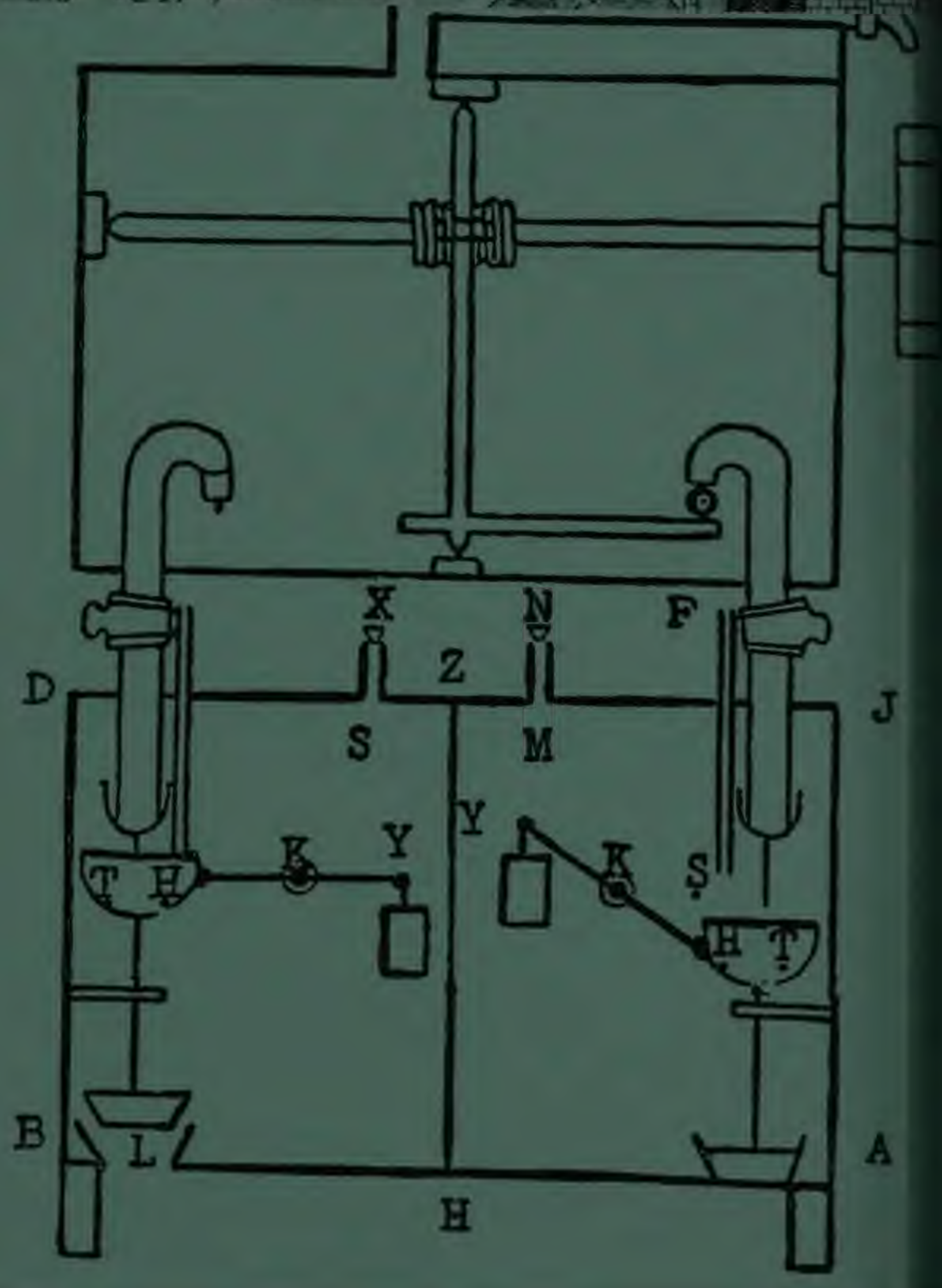


FIG. 8.—THE BANU MUSA AUTOMATIC HYDRAULIC ORGAN. (Reconstructed.)

Showing the three cisterns, (a) The water-cistern, (b) The air-cistern, (c) The air-compressing cistern.



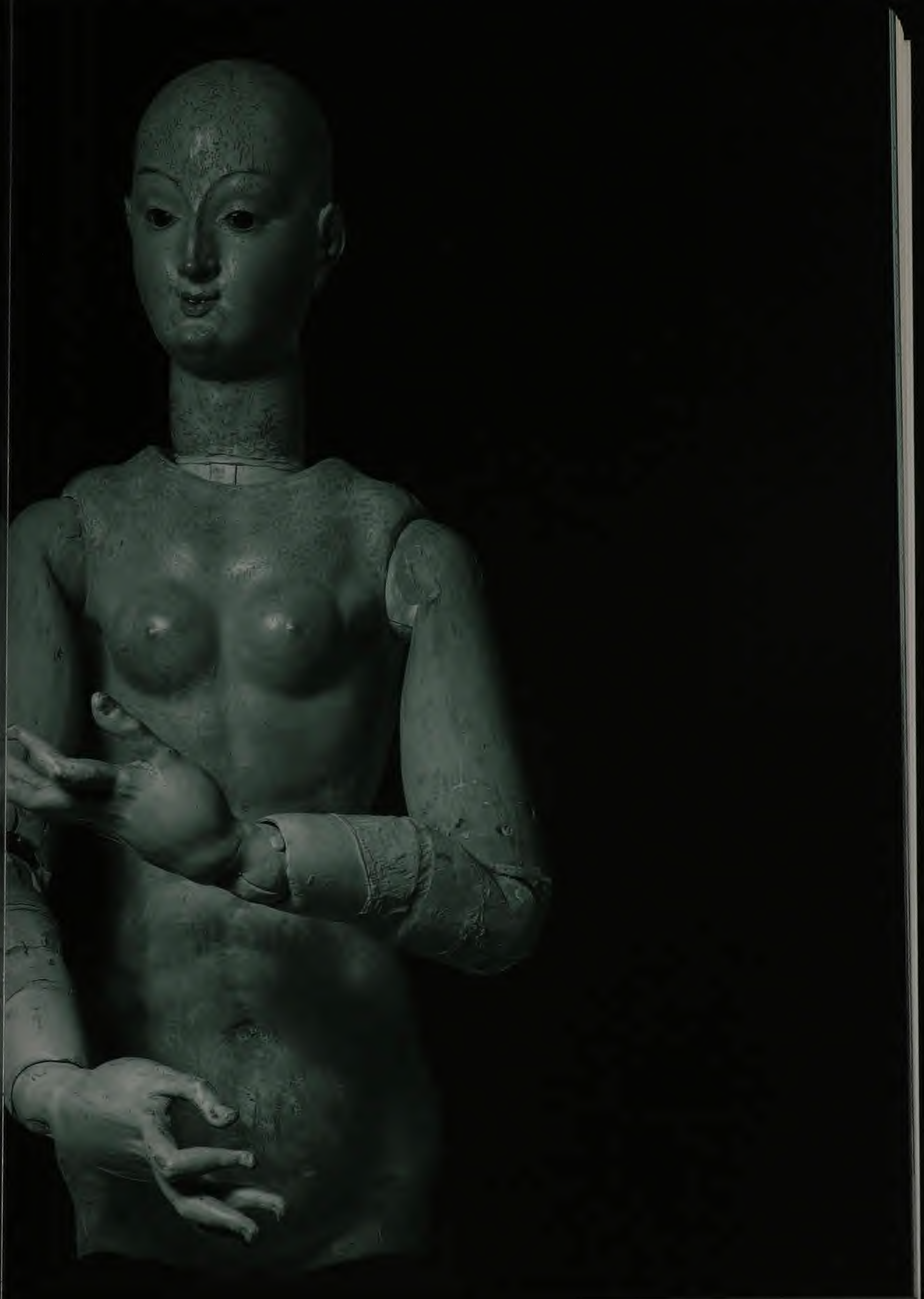
8b



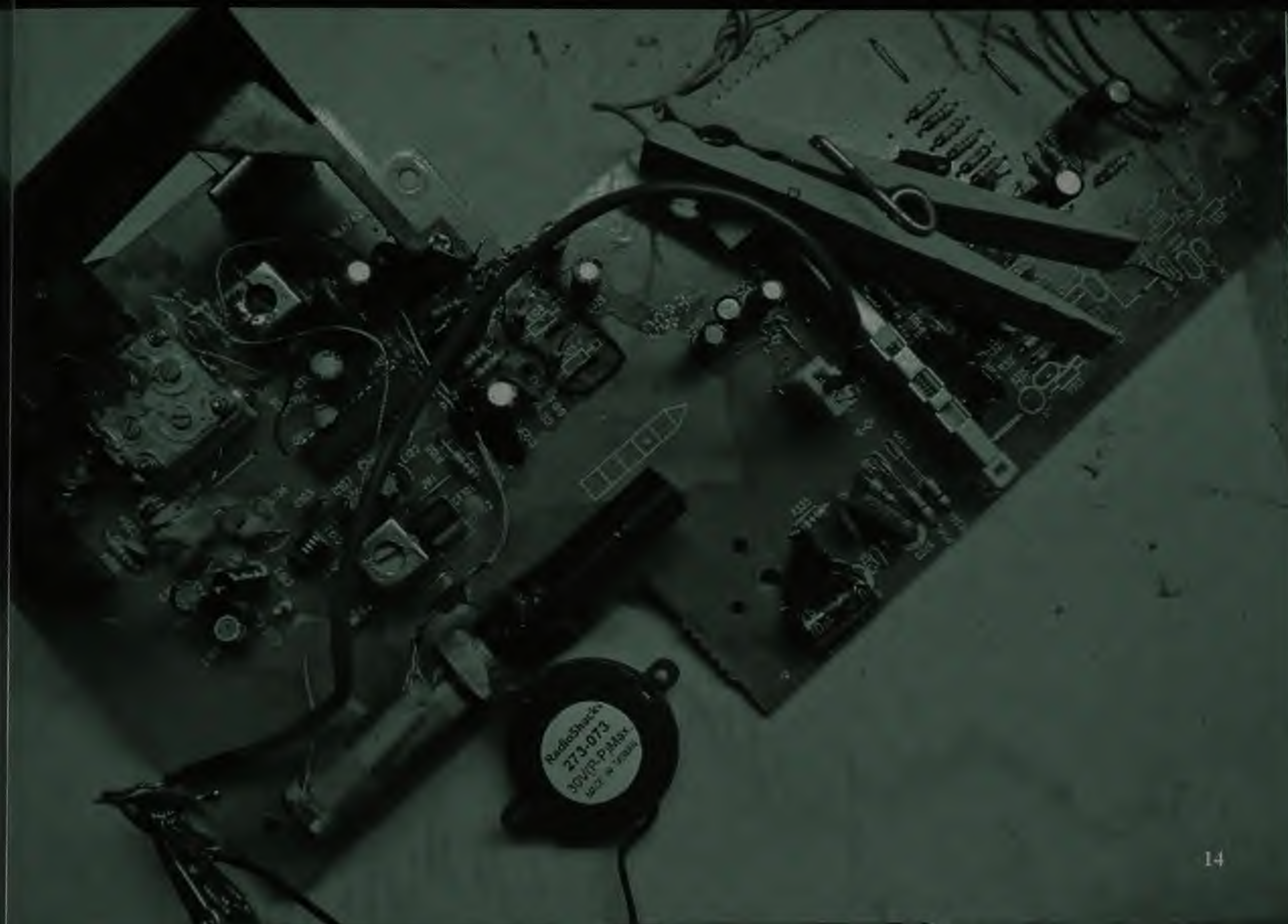
9











14



15

vibbrimntmrrre
arrmmttarrre comunicazioni turche
Sciukn Pascià - Costantinopoli



assalto contro Seyloglou mascherare assalto

importante contro Marasch punto Jebel
obbiettivo bulgare

per
telegrafo
senza fili

ministro della guerra infor-
mato dall'ambasciata turca
di Parigi che esercito serbo
rinforzare Bulgari davanti
Adrianopoli potere usurpato
dal Giovani Turchi ladri
assassini amembramento della
Turchia

impassibili soltre di Sciukn Pascià sup-
plicazioni di 3.000 affamati **toumtoum-**
toum tsa tsa colpi d'ascia assalto ai
forni negozi vuotati

prezzi
aumentati
del 300 %

zucchero	20	fr.	al	Kg.
riso	2	fr.	50	" "
petrolio	25	fr.	al	bidone
sale	18	fr.	al	Kg.



18



19









IMPERIAL HOTEL

SEDO DE LA REFORMA

ENCL. 1-28-01 210-14

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MEXICO, CITY



MEMBER AMERICAN CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE OF MEXICO
CABLE: "IMPHC-MX"
CODE A. B. C. 5TH EDITION











28



29



30



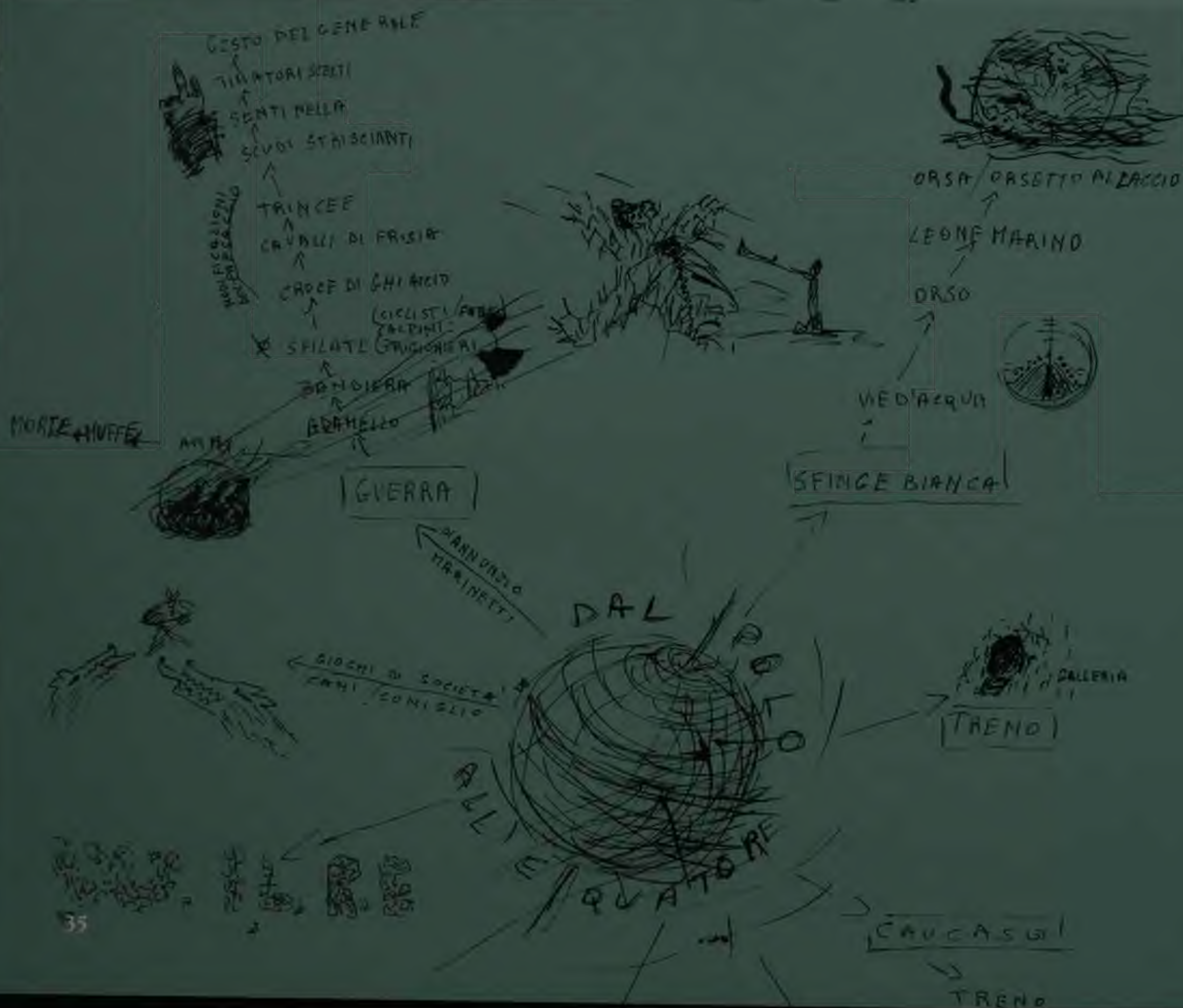
31



32



11



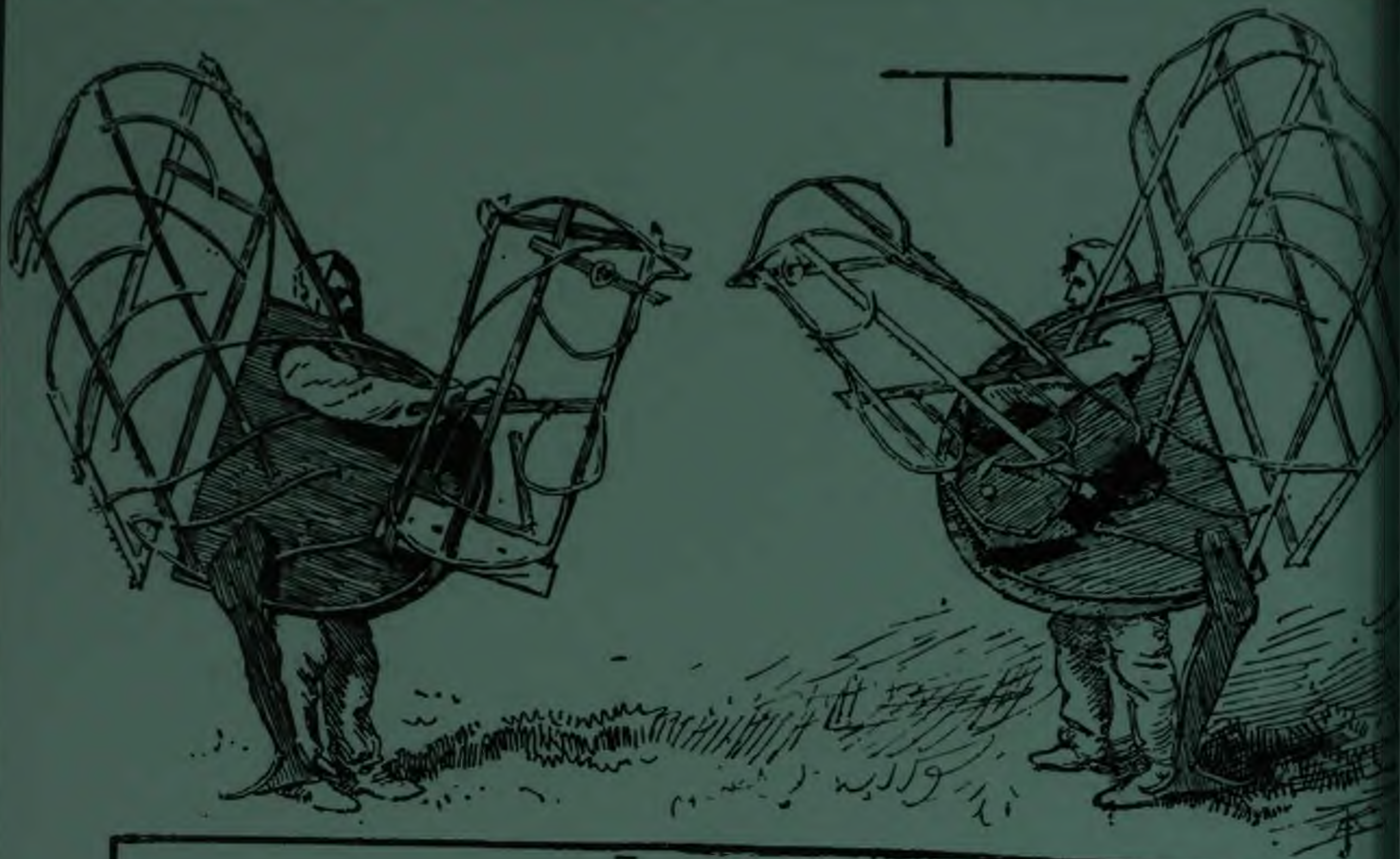












LIVING FIREWORKS.







45



一 一 十 二 二 四 二 一 五
丁 丁 丁 丁 丁 丁 丁 丁

大橋

千束町

千束町

千束町

花屋敷

遊樂館

十二階

交衆座

天正堂商店 洲野商店

西浦野店

六區

六

江ノ玉
川ノリ

浅草館

東京館



四

水族館

昆虫館

六

區

六

區

七

便所

區

万盛館

世界館

大勝館

六區

三友館

富士館

日光
カブチ館

帝國園館

子代田館

電氣館

クラク

常盤座

金竜館

クラク

水馬
ミク座
バカ
カンイ







52

ca 1959

Control Booth
Recording Stage 1
Description dept.



1X Ampex 351
1X Ampex 350
Mono 1/4"
(a console)



2X Ampex
350-2 1/4"

Jackiers



2X Ampex
350-3 1/2"

Dark Room

Soloist Room

3x Tannoy Golden
Amp. McIntosh 30W (60W)

Console Westrex
Italia 12x4
(project: Paris/Biondo)

Console Westrex
Italia 12x4
faders
Ba-21A (pre)
Ba-6A (comp) etc.
(project: Paris/Biondo)



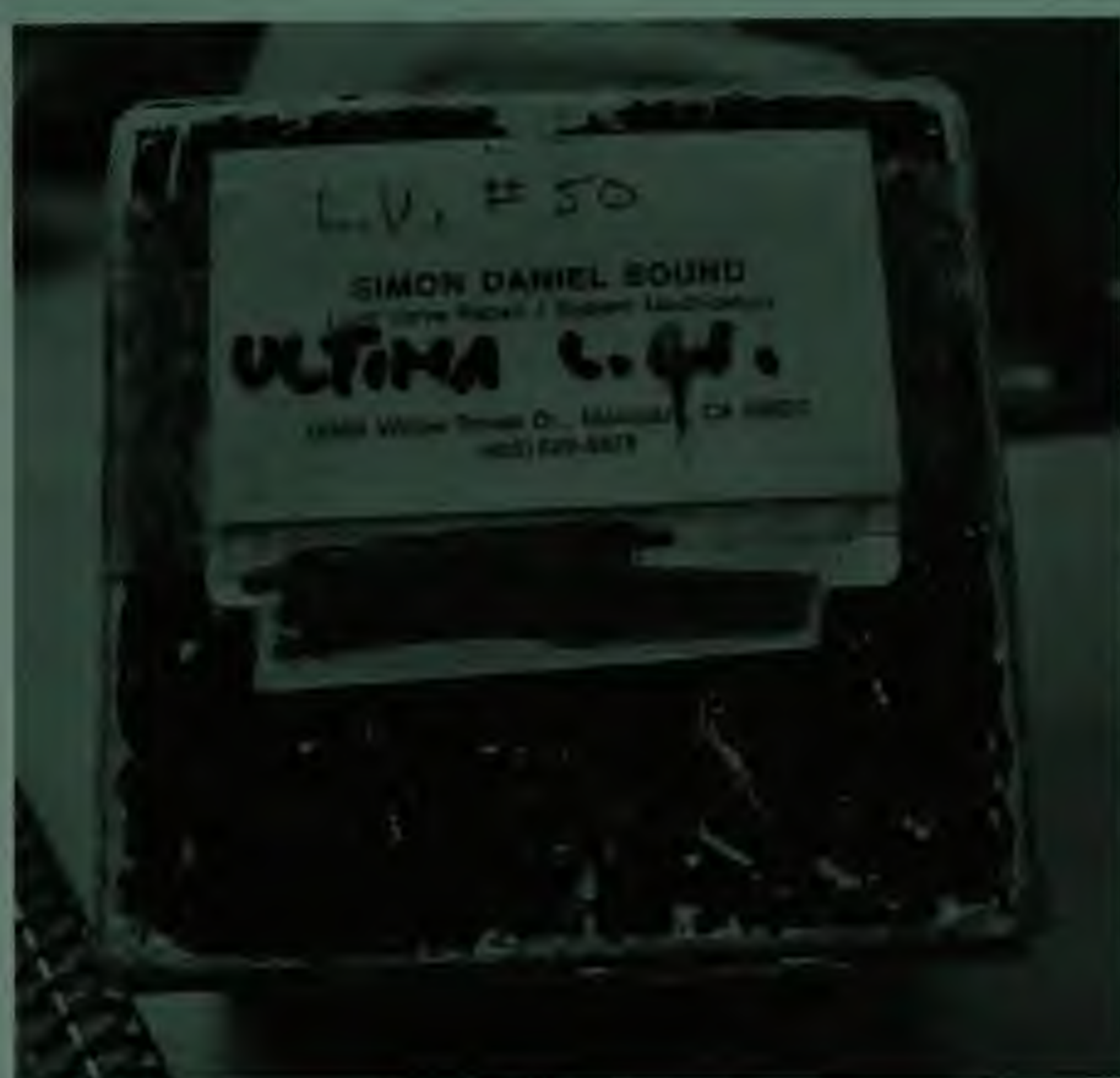
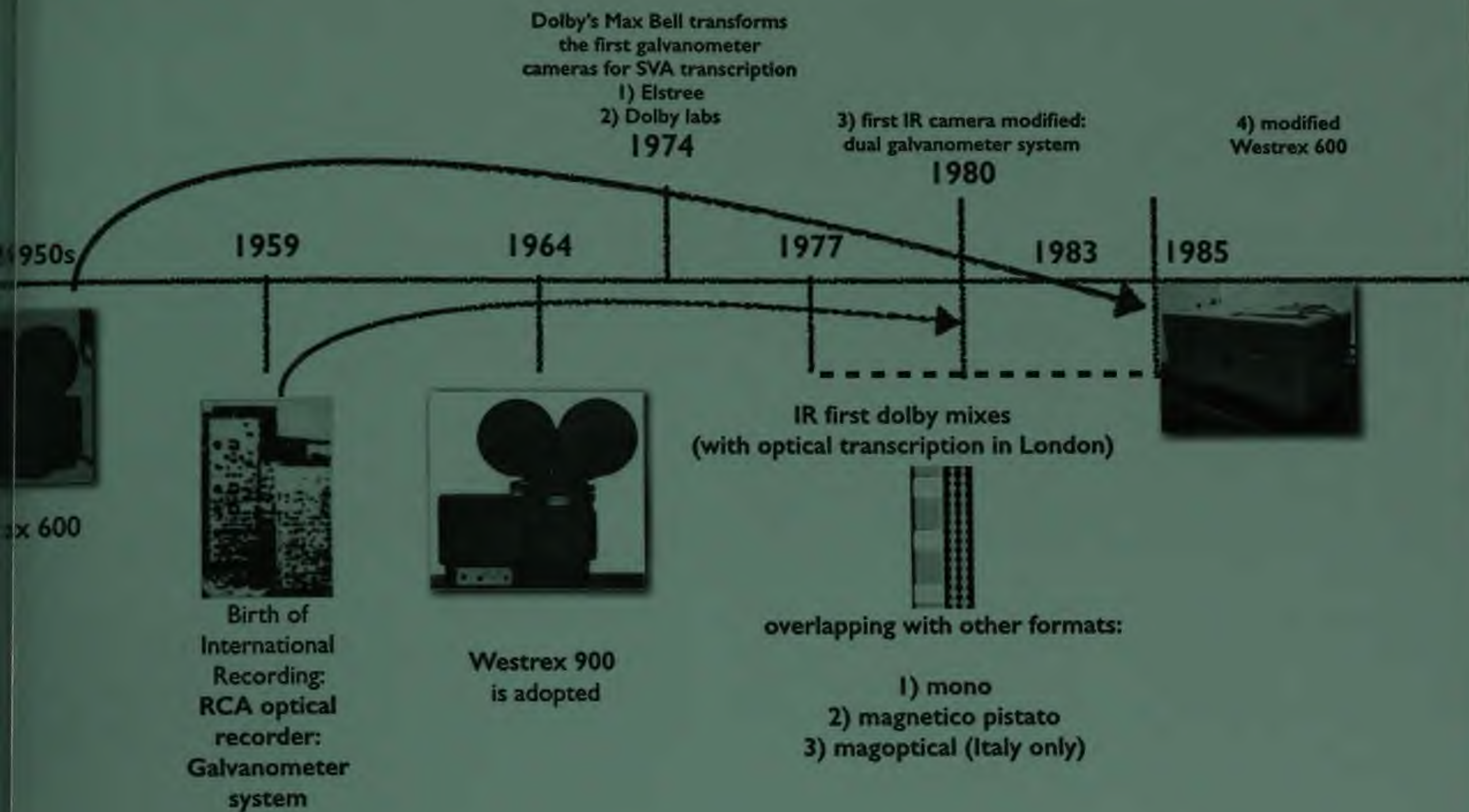
Amplifier: Simplex
Speaker: Simplex with Alvar
Lansing components

RCA 2000
galvanometer sys.
optical recorder

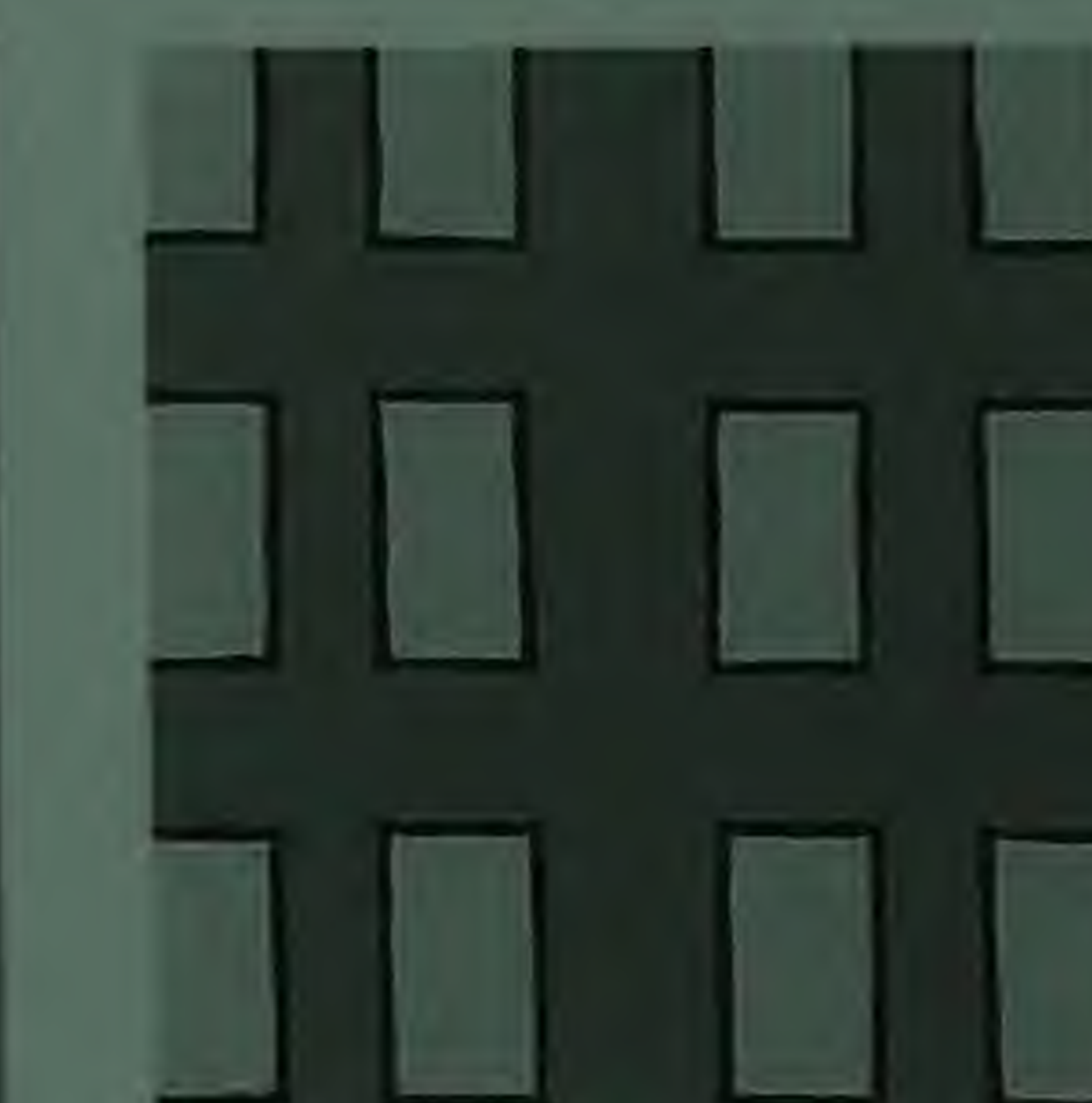
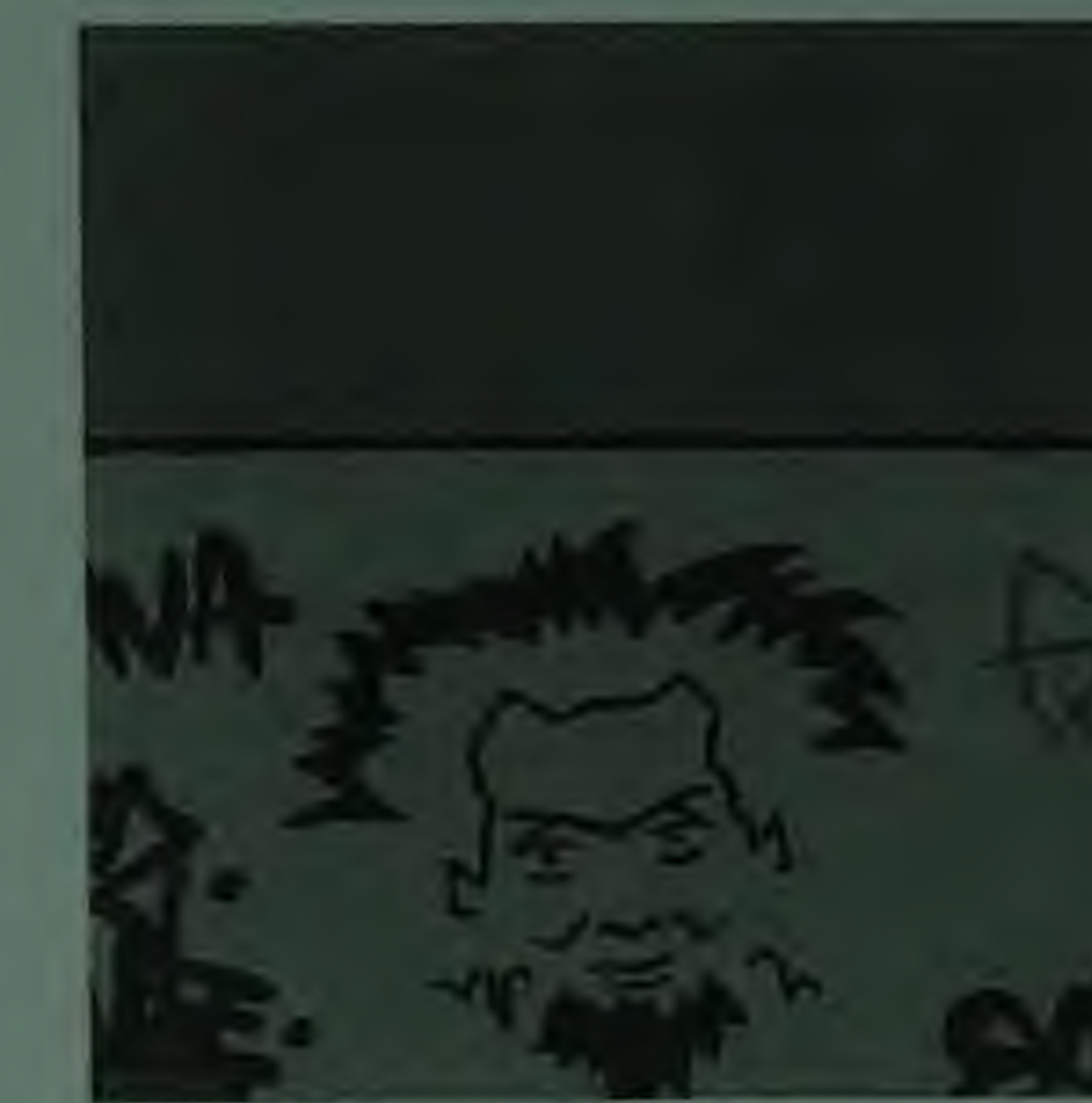
[Rangertone
1/2"-1/4"
a 35 mm magn. perf.]

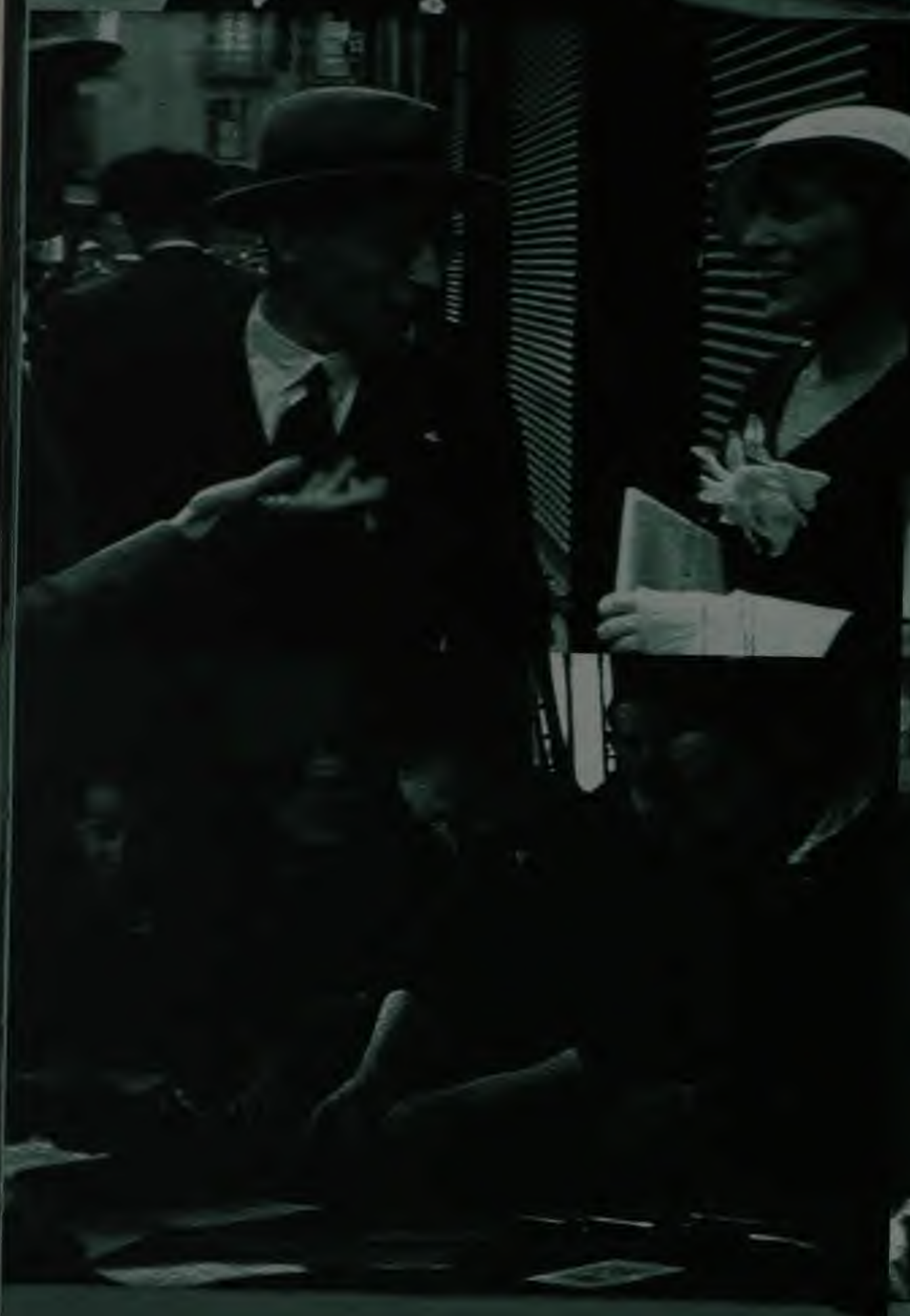
Record x Mix RCA
2X 35 mm magn. perf.
mono

Mixer:
U46
U48
KM54
KM56
KU-3s 10001
D12
D25
SM2





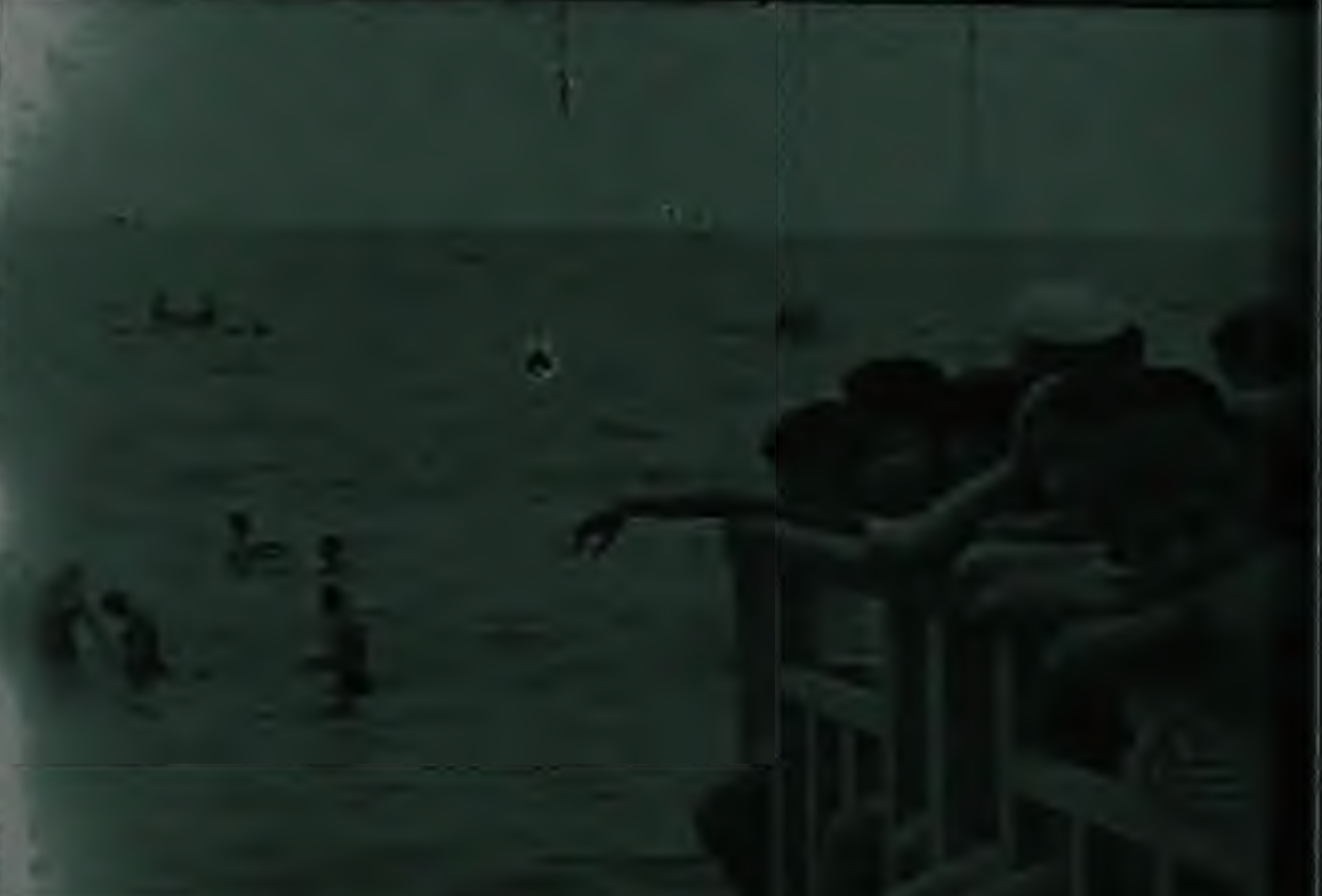
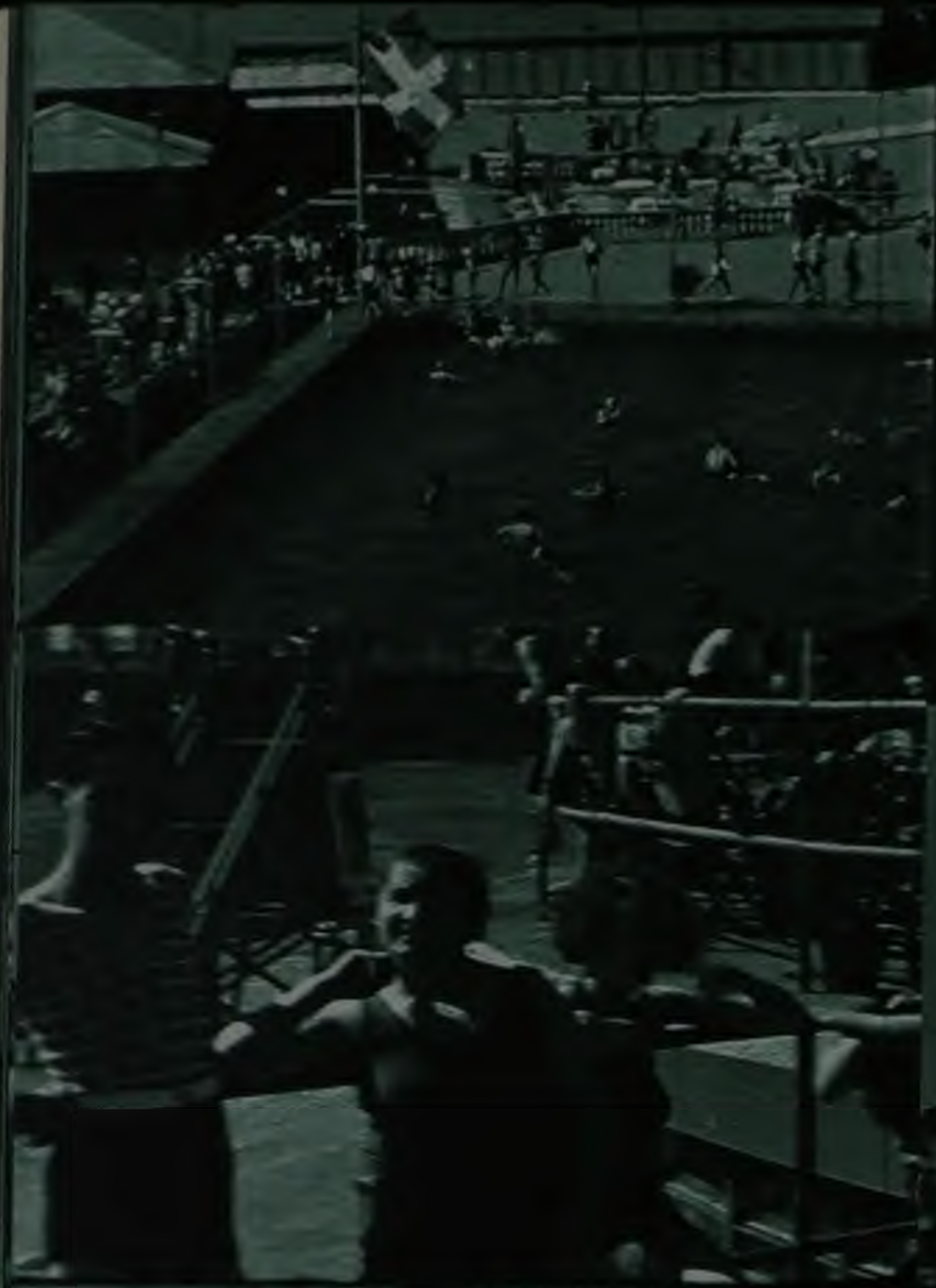


















1401 56 00 00

1401 56 00 00







S. E. STARACE

PASSA IN RIVISTA

GLI INTELLETTUALI

L'OMAGGIO DEL
"GRUPPO S. I. P."
AL DUCA GASTA
DI SUOI TRENTA
INVITI



FINE

FINE



**KOSCECKA,
GATTO
MONELLO**

**IL LIDO DI ROMA
OSTIA**



FINE

FINE







68



69

Au pays ou le temps ne
compte plus.

DAV 70

"Me give you nice tick-
tock...you give me little
oyster bead?"





Checkpoint Reached.

Cpt. MacMillan: It's a bloody convention out there. Get ready to move on my signal. Stay right behind

E SE S SW
1.5m

73

Cpt. MacMillan: Look at this place... Fifty thousand people used to live in this city. Now it's a ghost town. I've never seen anything like it.

NE E SE S
6.5m

74

PSYCHOLOGY WARNING

This video game psychologically profiles you
as you play.

It gets to know who you really are then uses this
information to change itself. It uses its knowledge
against you, creating your own personal nightmare.

This game plays you as much as you play it.

75



76

A man with dark hair and a beard is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark sweater. He is looking slightly to the left. His right hand is raised to his ear, and his left hand is visible at the bottom of the frame. The background is dark and out of focus.

© REJECT

⊗ FORGIVE



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Finito di stampare
nel mese di marzo 2015
presso la Tipografia Menini
di Spilimbergo (Pn)

Alberto Beltrame, Ludovica Fales, Giuseppe Fidotta, a cura di,
Whose Right?
(Udine: Forum, 2014), pp. 284.

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ISBN 978-88-8420-886-6



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